

Attack on Titan: The Black Angel

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Heavily based on Random Crossovers' Enemies of Humanity's Past After the Colossal Titan suddenly appears and kicks the wall in, a gigantic, mysterious cyborg rises from the grave to save humanity just as he had done in the past.

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Rise of the Black Angel

The sun beat down heavily early one morning in wall Rose, soldiers marched around in formation, rifles at the ready. They were guarding an enormous, crystalline temple located near Mitras. This temple, adorned with ornate sculptures that were seemingly built into the very foundation of the temple, was known to the walls as "The Tomb of the Black Angel." Entering the temple leads one to the main room of the temple, a massive hollow area surrounded by crystalline walls with several stone statues surrounding it, crystalline pillars holding the towering roof up, and an enormous number of balconies leading up to the roof of the building, each connected by crystal staircases. In the very center of the mountainous temple lies a massive sarcophagus over 200 meters in length, over 50 meters in height, and composed not of the crystal that made up the rest of the temple, but of neigh impenetrable stone. At the ceiling of the temple were several grey boxes attached to thick, black wires, of which no one realized the purpose. Up on the balconies, more soldiers stood guard, watching over the giant coffin.

Or at least, that's what they were hired to do.

In reality, because there was rarely an incident here, they spent most of their days playing cards and getting drunk, much like the majority of the Military Police around the walls. They would also occasionally make jokes questioning how anyone would steal anything here since everything was practically nailed down, or comment on how strange it is that the king puts so much importance on guarding this seemingly unused temple with a seeming lack of importance. The same was true for the guards on the outside, the majority of them just trying to find ways to keep themselves entertained while doing such a dull, boring job.

"Oi!" One of the soldiers called out to another one who was on the verge of dozing off. The soldier held his head up and looked over at

his comrade, a woman about a year younger than him, was holding out a deck of cards she brought with her from home. "Wanna play?"

"Sure, I'm game," he said with a yawn and a stretch before the two sat down and began playing poker. While they were playing, however, a third soldier walked up to them both.

"Hey guys, did you hear? The Scouts are returning later this morning."

"Oh yeah?" The woman asked. "How many do you think are dead?"

"Seventy," her poker opponent said.

"One hundred," the soldier standing up said.

"I'm betting all of them," she said as she showed her hand.

Fire. As far as the eye could see, there were only flames and destruction. And at the center of all that destruction was a colossal creature with skin like charcoal and an unwavering grin. Many heroes tried to stop him, but all of them lie dead at his feet. He grabbed one of these fallen heroes by the neck and hoisted him up to eye level. As he held the fallen hero, two more monsters emerged from the flames, one resembling a dark shadow with brightly colored wings, and the other resembling the devil himself. The king's mouth began to open wider, and wider, and wider, and then the two halves of his mouth became three-thirds, as a purple glow began to emanate from within the creature's mouth.

And then, Eren awoke. His vision was blurry at first, but he eventually made out the visage of his lifelong friend, Mikasa Ackerman, kneeling over him and waiting for him to wake up. Eren groggily rubbed his eyes and blinked the sleep out of his eyes as he tried to recall the dream that he just had. Eventually, he found his voice again and spoke to Mikasa.

"Sorry, I guess I just dozed off..." he said while sitting up, his hands grasping blades of grass. "Man... it's like the dream I was having just went on forever."

Mikasa grunted softly in acknowledgment, then picked up her back cart loaded with firewood. She turned to instruct Eren to do the same when she noticed a few misty drops beneath Eren's eyes.

"Eren?" She asked, "have you been crying?"

Eren touched his damp cheek in surprise as a gust of wind blew over the both of them.

The two eventually made it back on their path back home, soon approaching a fifty-meter tall wall that stood between them, and the giant, man-eating monsters on the other side. As the two walked back home, they were discussing the state Mikasa found Eren in, and how Eren had no idea why he was crying, nor why he was asleep in the first place since he didn't feel tired before falling asleep. He just suddenly and spontaneously fell unconscious. As the two talked, they were suddenly stopped by a Garrison member and family friend of theirs, Hannes, who greeted them with his signature warm, red-faced, drunken smile.

"Someone botherin' ya, kid?" He said teasingly as he stood in front of the two.

"Oh, hey," Eren said, while Mikasa silently waved.

"Or did you just get on Mikasa's bad side?"

"N-NO! That's not i-" Eren stopped mid-sentence and covered his nose in disgust. "Ugh! You smell like a tavern!"

Eren, Mikasa, and Hannes then overheard some of the other garrison members laughing at Eren's comment while playing cards and drinking ale. Eren was a bit annoyed by the soldiers as they laughed, while Hannes jokingly asked the kids if they cared to join in.

Eren didn't acknowledge this, instead changing the subject to a growing concern that this display of laziness gave him.

"Aren't you supposed to be watching the walls?" He asked. Hannes chuckled and pointed up with his thumb before answering the young boy's rhetorical question.

"Yep! Watchin' the old gate, we are!" He then placed his hands on his hips and gave a tired look. "Thirsty work though, playing sentry, and pinochle only goes so far to chase off the boredom. Lil' nip now n' then keeps us all on our courage for a spell. Just one of the perks of being a guard!"

Eren was almost insulted by this display of laziness, apathy, and ignorance. He growled at the man before shouting, "How do you expect to protect us if you're so loose on your feet?!"

Hannes raised an eyebrow and questioned why he would have to fight.

"Why do you think?! What if **they** break through the walls?! We'd be sitting ducks on your watch!"

Hannes groaned and covered one ear after Eren's outburst. "Kid, not so loud! Use your inside voice, please!"

One of the other garrison members chuckled, commenting on Eren's fiery attitude before stepping up to explain to the kids that there's nothing to worry about.

"Listen, the only thing the titans have done in the past hundred years is scratch at it," he said. "And I have a pretty good feeling that if the titans do get it in their big heads to try something else, we'll be ready for it."

"A FEELING!?" Eren shouted in shock. "WHAT HAVE ANY OF YOU DONE TO BE READY FOR THEM!? DAD SAYS YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO STAY SHARP!"

"Ahh, good," Hannes said with a pleased tone in his voice. "Yeah, well it's hard to argue with the man who singlehandedly spared us from the plague. But the thing is, he's talking about his scalpel, and what we do isn't half as important. I don't mean any disrespect to your dad, but a soldier's time beyond the wall tends to put things into perspective. When you see them wandering around out there, mindless n' dead-eyed-"

"Wait a minute," Eren interrupted. "It sounds to me like you don't even think they're all that dangerous."

Hannes shrugged, confirming Eren's suspicion. Eren gasped and then gritted his teeth and raised his voice once again.

"OH! Well if that's the case, at least don't tell people you're a garrison! PEOPLE MIGHT GET THE WRONG IDEA!"

Hannes laughed at that and jokingly agreed to Eren's comment.

"Look at it this way though. **If** the garrison is doing what people think it oughta, it means they did get in, and if that happens, then we're up a creek. Personally, I take stock in being called a slacker. It means life is good. Peace of mind, I guess you could call it."

Eren's frustration was immeasurable and his disgust nearly caused bile to rise in his throat. He leaned down and clenched his fists around the straps on his arms, his hands trembling and rattling the firewood on his back.

"Good? You call this good?" Eren quietly hissed. "We live in a cage. All we do is eat and sleep. That's it. Nothing else. We have the peace of mind of livestock, and you call this good? You're wrong! This is no way to live!"

And with that, Eren marched past Hannes, Mikasa following Eren with a soft expression on her face after seeing him like that. Hannes sighed as they walked away, rationalizing that he's just a kid who tends to dream bigger than life wants him to.

On their trek back home, all Eren could think about was how humanity's lives would be so much better if they all worked together to take back the world that was rightfully theirs. How it wasn't fair that the titans were able to bully them into hiding behind these walls, which in his eyes were the ultimate symbol of mankind's submission to the titans. As the two walked, Mikasa decided that now that they were alone, she could confront Eren about his aspirations of joining the military.

"Hey, Eren?" Mikasa said, catching Eren's attention. "I don't think you should join the scout regiment."

Eren huffed in annoyance. "Seriously? Look, I don't care if everyone sees them as a joke! I'm going to join them!"

"Their reputation isn't the problem."

But before Mikasa could finish, a church bell started ringing in the distance, signaling that the scouts were returning from their latest expedition. Eren grabbed Mikasa's hand and hurried to the crowd of citizens waiting for them to return. The two arrived just in time to see Eren's heroes riding back through Shingonshina. However, while Eren was initially excited to see them, his excitement turned to confusion when he saw the disheveled looks on the leaders' faces, and then to horror when he saw the state the rest of the scouts were in.

Almost all of them were wounded in some way shape or form. Some were injured to the point where they had to be carried in wagons. Others had unimaginable injuries buried beneath layers upon layers of blood-stained bandages. Even worse, of the hundreds of soldiers sent out to fight the titans, only a handful remained. No one needed to ask what happened to the rest, because they all already knew.

They were eaten by the titans.

"MOSES! MOSES!"

Eren looked over at the other side of the crowd and saw an elderly woman break away from it and confront the commander of the scouts, Kieth Shaddes.

"I beg your pardon, but where is my son?" The woman asked. "Oh please tell me he made it."

"I wish I had better news." Keith turned to a soldier behind her. "Give it to her."

A look of utter panic swept over the woman's face as the implication hit her like a tidal wave. She tried her best to deny the truth, believing in her mind that there was still a chance he was alive, but those hopes were dashed when they handed her something that was swaddled up in a rag. The woman slowly unwrapped it and then screamed in horror when her own son's severed arm met her, the only thing they were able to recover after he was killed.

She began to sob and fell to her knees, prompting Keith to take a knee in front of her in an attempt to console her.

"H-h-he... he was b-brave... yes? Please, tell me my son stood his ground to the bitter end... **THAT HIS DEATH MEANT SOMETHING! PLEASE! I NEED TO KNOW HIS SACRIFICE GAVE US A BETTER CHANCE!**" The woman screamed with tears streaming down her face.

"He was brave!" Keith began but stopped himself. Anything he said in an attempt to console her besides that would be a lie. A lie he just couldn't bring himself to tell her. "But no. As with all our losses, his death meant nothing! It's ever the same..." Keith finally broke out into tears as well as he laid the truth bare. "**THE DAY WAS LOST, AND WE HAVE NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT! YOUR SON DIED BECAUSE OF ME! I SENT HIM TO HIS DEATH! I SENT ALL OF THEM TO THEIR DEATHS! AND THERE'S NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT! ALL OF IT AMOUNTS TO NOTHING!**"

Eventually, the scouts moved on, disgraced and dejected from yet another failure, leaving the crowd to mutter to themselves. Some even took the opportunity to heckle the Scouts for their repeated failures. However, one of these hecklers was swiftly smacked over the head with a piece of wood by none other than Eren.

"OW! YOU LITTLE PUNK!"

"You... YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE!" Eren roared, "YOU BASTARD! YOU DON'T GET TO TALK ABOUT THEM LIKE THA-A-AAAA!" But before Eren could finish, Mikasa dragged him down an alleyway, leaving the man he just hit to scream and shake his fist at him.

Mikasa, thoroughly done with Eren's nonsense, dragged him kicking and screaming before throwing him into a wall, causing him to drop his cart and wood to scatter all over the ground. Eren groaned and clutched his arm and groaned.

"So, are you still determined to become one of them?" Mikasa asked coldly. The two were silent for a few seconds, Eren trying to come up with a retort, but drawing a blank every time. Finally, he broke the silence by ignoring the question entirely.

"Just help me pick these up..." Eren said as he began to gather the dropped firewood.

"Not like there was much, to begin with," Mikasa replied. Still, she did help Eren despite that.

Following that whole ordeal, Eren and Mikasa arrived at home, where Eren's parents were waiting for him. His father, Grisha Jaeger, was writing his down notes on a piece of paper, while his mother, Carla Jaeger, was in front of Grisha doing the dishes. Carla stopped what she was doing to greet Eren with a warm smile, while Grisha looked back for a moment and smiled at his son, before returning to his work.

Eren and Mikasa dumped all their firewood into a nearby chest, and while Mikasa went to help with the dishes, Carla took a break to talk to her son.

"Wow, you must have been working hard to get that much wood," She said while Eren finished dumping his into the chest.

"Yeah..." Eren said nonchalantly, before suddenly feeling Carla give his ear a gentle pinch. "OW! What was that for?"

"Your earlobe's red. That means you have something to hide," Carla said teasingly. "Mikasa helped you again, didn't she?"

Eren groaned but nodded reluctantly.

After the dishes were finished, lunch was prepared, and the family sat down to eat together. All except Grisha, who was packing his things for an important business trip in the interior wall, Rose. While they were all together, Mikasa finally decided to bring up the topic of Eren's aspirations to the rest of the family.

"So... Eren's thinking about joining the scouts." She said, prompting Carla to gasp in shock and Eren to stop eating as he stared at Mikasa in disbelief.

"WHAT THE HECK, MIKASA!?"

"GET THOSE THOUGHTS OUT OF YOUR HEAD, YOUNG MAN!" Carla shouted, before getting up in Eren's face to scold him. "No son of mine is going to be fodder to those beasts out there! Do you hear me?!"

Eren, undaunted, pushed back against his mother.

"I don't care! It's better than being stuck behind a wall for the rest of my life!"

Grisha nodded with intrigue at Eren's conviction, then spoke up.

"Tell me, Eren, why do you want to go outside the walls so badly?" He asked. "You do know what could happen to you, right?"

"Yeah, I know! I know exactly what can happen to me, but it's better than living the life of a mindless farm animal!"

Grisha's lips stretched into a slight smile. "I see. Well, I'd best be going." Grisha then stood up, grabbed his bag, and headed for the door. Carla tried to stop him, get him to scold his son, and help her convince Eren that this was a bad idea, but he refused, simply pulling the key to the basement out of his coat. "Eren, when I get back, I'll finally show you what I've been working on in the basement."

After dangling that carrot on a stick in front of his son's eyes, he departed, leaving him and his wife to continue to argue while he got on a chariot to the interior. As he departed, he looked out the window and took in all the sights of Shinganshina that they passed by. He almost didn't want to do this. He knew he would miss all of this, and he would never be able to return to it if everything went according to plan. However, seeing the massive wall Maria looming large over him and the rest of Shinganshina made him feel small, weak, and trapped, and all these feelings reminded him of why he was doing this, to begin with.

Meanwhile, a short, blonde-haired boy by the name of Armin Arlert was being pinned against a wall and pummeled by a group of bullies who were teasing him for his sacrilegious desires and beliefs. Despite being beaten down, Armin never fought back, instead choosing to retaliate with wit and words, commenting on the bullies' inferior intellect and how they always resort to violence like a bunch of chimpanzees. The bully was just about to strike at Armin again for daring to talk back to him like that, when Eren and Mikasa, mostly Mikasa, arrived to scare them off. Afterward, Eren helped Armin to his feet, and the three took a walk to the river, where Armin explained to the duo that they were picking on him for mentioning how he believed humanity's future was outside the walls.

"That's so stupid," Eren commented as he chucked a rock into the river. "Why can't they just let us dream?"

"Well, I can see where they're coming from, even if I don't agree," Armin said. "Most people are scared to speak up about this sort of thing for fear of consequences. But more than that, the walls are a powerful idea. They've been standing for over 100 years, and they've kept us safe all this time. It's just human nature. When all's said and done, the government's policies are a reflection of our fears."

"Not mine," Eren countered. "I say to hell with that!"

"Someone's gonna hear you if you keep talking that loudly," Mikasa said.

"What do I care? You'll just rat me out anyway!"

"Hey, I never promised you I'd keep it from your parents."

"Wait, your folks know about the scouts?" Armin asked.

"Yep," Eren replied with a sigh. "And they're not happy."

"Yeah, big shock there..."

As the trio of friends sat by the river, the wind began to kick up as they contemplated the situation. To Eren and Armin, the whole world was against them. They only had each other and a select few other people to turn to, with that list growing smaller with all the time. But no matter what, they knew that they'd always have each other's backs in their quest to liberate themselves from the shackles of safety and be free to see the world.

As they contemplated this, a bolt of lightning suddenly struck down just outside the walls, followed by a massive boom that shook the ground and launched the three friends into the air. When the dust settled, the three saw people running to the town square to get a

good look at the wall. The three followed the crowd but stopped in their tracks when they saw it.

A titan. A titan larger than any titan before it, without any skin on it, only having exposed muscle, and a face resembling a corpse. The Colossal Titan gripped the top of the wall, then lifted its head to look down upon the horrified citizens. It then slowly wound its massive leg back while holding onto the wall with both hands for balance, before slamming it into the gate, causing a massive wave of destruction throughout the city as debris crushed houses and people, and the force of the resulting explosion flattened every house closeby. It was a massacre, but the worst was yet to come. Because now that the wall had been breached, the titans were able to break in.

Eren and Mikasa fled the scene as soon as they realized that one of the rocks landed near their house, and left Armin behind as they disappeared into the crowd. Armin held out his hand but pulled it down as the horror of the situation sank in. Every last one of them was going to be devoured.

Meanwhile, back in Sheena, rumblings were happening there as well, as the guards of the tomb of the Black Angel all felt the earth shake beneath them. Before they could even question what was happening, they looked up and saw the grey boxes on the ceiling of the temple whirr to life before they heard something that sounded like a human voice come from all of them at once. The woman was speaking in a very monotone voice, but she was speaking their language nonetheless. But what she was saying confused all of them.

" Hostile kaiju activity detected. Infinity Engine reactivated."

They understood some of these words, but others were alien to them, and when placed in those two brief non-sentences, they sounded bizarre. And then, the speakers kept going, mentioning things like "weapon systems" and "charged particle generators" and other things that they had never heard of before. Then, just when

they thought things couldn't get any stranger, the sarcophagus began to open.

" All systems online. All hard drives restored. Welcome back, Gigan."

What emerged was a towering mass of black metal with a silver beak and bright red lights adorning its body. One of these lights formed a singular eye which blinked several times, before the massive metal dragon arose from his slumber, revealing hands that resembled saws, a tail with a sharpened claw, and large wings with a sail at the center. The soldiers all stood in disbelief. All this time, they thought they were guarding what amounted to nothing more than a superstition, but no. The Black Angel was real. And more than that, he was alive.

After taking in his surroundings, the Angel spread his wings and took to the skies, flying straight out the front door and into the sky, traveling at speeds so quick that the people watching couldn't even perceive it. In their eyes, he was there one moment, and gone the next, without a trace.

As Eren and Mikasa ran home, they saw numerous people crushed by rocks and debris, or simply lying dead on the ground. Eren repeated to himself that their house was fine and that Carla would still be there, but then Eren screamed in horror when he saw his house was completely flattened.

Carla slowly opened her eyes when she heard her son's scream. She then saw Mikasa and Eren get to her sides and attempt to free her. However, they weren't strong enough to make it even budge, and to make matters worse, the titans were approaching them.

"Oh no..." Carla looked up at her son. "Eren, listen to me. Get Mikasa out of here, quickly!"

"NO! I'M NOT LEAVING YOU HERE!"

"Eren, my legs have been completely crushed. I can't come with you."

"THEN I'LL CARRY YOU ON MY BACK!"

Carla tried her best to get Eren to leave her, even asking Mikasa to take him, but no matter what she said, neither of them would leave her side. They both loved her too much to let her die like this. She wished Grisha was here to talk some sense into them, but even then, some part of her believes he would just help them as well. Just when things seemed hopeless, Hannes arrived to help them.

"Hannes, please! Take the children and run!" Carla pleaded, but even Hannes refused.

"Come on, Carla, that's not our only option," he said. "I'm a soldier, remember? This is what I was trained for."

"No! Don't!" Carla pleaded, but it was too late. Hannes already ran towards the titan steadily making its way towards them, planning to kill it on the spot... and then he turned tail and ran the moment he saw its face.

Hannes hoisted Eren and Mikasa into his arms and did as Carla asked, despite Eren's protests. As they ran away, Carla began to sob as she watched them flee. She didn't actually want them to leave her, but she knew deep down that there was no other way, as the titan casually brushed the debris off of her and reached down to grab her. She let out one last scream of terror as the titan's fingers were just about to clamp down onto her, Eren watching from within Hannes' grip as it all went down.

But then something strange happened.

The titan stopped.

In fact, all the titans stopped.

Save for a few dozen abnormal titans, all the titans stopped in their tracks, the people they were about to devour unexpectedly spared a gruesome fate, as they all looked up to the sky. Eren looked up as well and saw a strange, black figure flying in front of the sun. Its arms were stretched out to its sides and a low-pitched, repetitive noise came from it, drawing the attention of all the titans. The figure then flew over to the breach in the wall, hovering just above it and luring all the titans over to it, before flying away into the distance, with the majority of the titans following, almost as though they were in some kind of trance.

"Well, I'll be damned..." Hannes said. As soon as the majority of titans cleared the area, Hannes put Mikasa and Eren down and the three returned to Carla, then pulled her out of whatever debris was left behind. Hannes then ripped off pieces of his clothes to act as makeshift bandages for her bleeding legs before carrying her to an escape boat with the kids in tow, making sure to avoid any abnormal titans or even just regular titans that were left behind by the flying creature.

They thankfully made it just in time for Eren, Mikasa, and Carla to reach the last boat. Before Hannes left to attend to his duties, he took a knee in front of Eren and placed his hands on his shoulders.

"Listen, kid, I need to go help fight off these bastards. While I'm out there, I need you and Mikasa to get Carla to a hospital as soon as you get off the boat. Do you understand?"

Eren nodded with a determined look in his eyes. "Yes sir!"

Hannes nodded before zipping off with his ODM gear as just one thought crossed his mind. 'It's time to be a damn hero.'

As Hannes flew away, he contemplated why the titans would chase that creature in the sky. He figured that maybe the titans had beef with it or something, but whatever the case may be, he was just happy that it showed up when it did, and even more so that his mother was okay. Even if she lost her legs, she was alive, and that

was all that mattered to him right now. Eren remained close to his mother throughout the remainder of the trip, tears welling up in both their eyes as they both held onto each other. Mikasa and Armin both saw this and were happy the two had each other, though Armin eventually had to ask what happened to Carla's legs.

"That huge titan did this..." Eren growled. "When he kicked the wall, one of the pieces of debris fell onto our house, with my mom still inside. Her legs were completely crushed, and she was trapped. She could have died if it weren't for that... thing."

"Oh..." Armin stood up and took a seat next to his best friend. "I'm sorry Eren."

"Don't apologize, Armin. It's not your fault," he said. He then looked up and saw the remaining titans rampaging through his home and his hate boiled. "It's theirs... and I'm going to eradicate every single one of them."

Meanwhile, down in an alleyway, a blond, muscular young girl leaned against a wall with her arms crossed, waiting for her associates to arrive. Eventually, he heard the rumbling of heavy footsteps as a titan covered head to toe in armor plating arrived with a human cupped in his hands. The Armored Titan dropped the brown-haired, slightly darker-skinned tall boy off with Annie before nodding to both of them and rushing towards the gate leading deeper into wall Maria.

"So... why did Reiner just drop you here in his Armored form, Bertholdt?" The girl asked with crossed arms. "Wasn't I supposed to do it while he goes straight for the gate?"

"I'm sorry, Annie," he said. "But Reiner saw I was about to get eaten by a titan, so he came and rescued me."

Annie rolled her eyes. "So you're telling me your idea to exit your titan as soon as you kicked the wall was a bad idea? What a shock."

The lambasting from Annie was interrupted when a titan loomed over them. Annie sighed upon seeing it and held one hand up to her mouth.

"We'll talk about this later."

Out in the countryside, Gigan landed in a clearing so far away from the walls that they were completely out of sight. He then aimed his chainsaw hand to the ground and it suddenly slipped into his arm, which then shifted and deformed and in just a second transformed into a square-shaped nozzle that sprayed out a tiny amount of nano metal that then replicated and coalesced into a large device with the letters "O.R.C.A." written on the front of it. It released the same noise that his own in-built O.R.C.A. was making, but without the ability to create a new Infinity Engine, this O.R.C.A. would only last a few days max. He hoped that would give the humans enough time to patch up the hole in their wall while he took flight, flying off to find his old friend Ymir Fritz, and find out what on Earth happened that made her do this.

Flight of Discovery

The badlands were brimming with battle as a swarm of giant dragonflies known as the Meganula, accompanied by giant grubs known as Meganulons, flew into battle against an army of soldiers armed with machine guns, tanks, and four-meter-tall Exosuits armed with arm-mounted machine guns. The two enemy armies battled tooth and nail, with the swarm being slowly but surely pushed back by the army, bodies piling up in the thousands on both sides.

"THIS IS THE MOMENT OF TRUTH, HUNTERS," the commander shouted from the frontlines. "WE EIGHTER SECURE THE BADLANDS FOR HUMANITY, OR WE DIE!"

'If we pull this off, these damn monsters won't stand a chance against humanity,' the commander thought. 'The resources alone will be enough to rebuild our mazers and repair damaged markelite towers. Hell, we could probably even rebuild the mechs of old. We just have to beat these damn bugs.'

"COMMANDER!" One of the soldiers cried, snapping him out of his trance. He looked back and saw his second in command hurrying to his side. "The scouts are back with bad news! Two Varans coming in fast at 4 o'clock! Should we pull out?"

The commander clenched his fist in frustration. Their weapons couldn't do anything against one Varan, let alone two. He cursed under his breath before preparing to give the order to fall back. However, looking back out over the battlefield, he realized that retreat wasn't an option either. If they retreated, the Meganulons and Meganula would no doubt take advantage of their retreat and thin their numbers even further, possibly even killing them all while their guard was down. They wouldn't be able to thin the numbers quickly enough either, because at the rate things were going, the Varans would arrive before they could retreat. Countless lives would be lost

either way and with the ticking clock, he had to make a decision fast, before the Varans arrived.

Just as he felt that all hope was lost, however, a plane suddenly swooped overhead and air dropped two passengers. Bolts of lightning suddenly struck both of them, and then masses of flesh began to form around the two until they formed into two towering humanoid monsters, the Cart Titan and the Beast Titan. The two titan shifters landed in the epicenter of the swarm and began fighting their way out of it, their thick titan skin allowing them to power through the flurry of bites and energy-draining stings. The two titan shifters stomping and swatting their way through the swarm provided just the backup that the hunters needed to make a quick escape.

"ALL UNITS, FALL BACK," the commander ordered. "REGROUP BACK AT CAMP!"

The hunters did as instructed and turned tail to flee. Some Meganula and Meganulons took a few cheap shots at the fleeing soldiers, even managing to down an Exosuit or two before the hunters escaped. With the area clear, the Beast Titan began picking up boulders, crushing them into smaller shards, and then throwing them into the swarm. The rocks flew at the speed of shotgun pellets and shredded through the swarm, in the process clearing a path for him and the Cart Titan to accompany the hunters. The Beast Titan looked down to check on the Cart Titan and found her body covered in Meganula, their tails all glowing white as they sucked her energy out through their tails. The Cart Titan itself was left emaciated and immobilized, with the power's holder, Pieck Finger, jutting out of the naip, which the Beast Titan quickly plucked her out of before hardening his skin on several areas of his body and fleeing through the path he created, leaving the bugs at the mercy of the incoming Varans.

As they were escaping, the Beast Titan could hear the swarm chasing behind him, the Meganula moving fast enough to keep up with him even at his top speed. The Beast Titan clamped his eyes shut and pushed himself even harder, but the Meganula just kept gaining on him. He could hear their buzzing inching closer and closer

until suddenly, a massive explosion launched him forwards. He looked back and saw an enormous pillar of red light sweeping across the field, incinerating every giant bug it touched. The Beast Titan and Pieck both looked up to the source of the beam and their jaws hung low as they saw a giant, black and red figure flying above the battlefield, destroying the Meganula and Meganulons with his eye beam.

After eliminating them all, Gigan prepared to eliminate the titan he saw below him but paused when an even greater threat presented itself, in the form of the two Varans arriving from the sky and dog-piling him. Realizing that the giant machine wasn't entirely on their side, the Beast Titan made a break for it while Gigan was distracted.

Gigan screeched and howled as the two Varans bit and scratched at him before throwing both of them off. The minimal amount of damage they did regenerated almost instantly, and he immediately got into a fighting stance, feet square, tail down, and chainsaws aimed at his opponents. The Varans jumped at him one by one, with Gigan dispatching the first flying amphibian with a chainsaw to the face which tore right through its elastic skin and sent it tumbling to the ground while Gigan kicked the other in the face. Gigan's hooked foot wasn't as effective in piercing the Varan's flesh, but the impact alone broke several teeth and left it open for a jet blast from the sole of Gigan's foot, burning right through it and leaving a massive hole in its chest.

The second Varan got up on its hind legs, panting heavily. Gigan noticed that its regeneration was already starting to kick in, and so attempted to interrupt it by firing a blade from his chest right into the wound. But before he could do so, the Varan unleashed a sonic blast that temporarily scrambled his targeting and navigation systems and let him open to a bite to the neck. Unfortunately, this simply put it in a range that he couldn't miss. He proceeded to shove his chainsaw hand through the Varan's head, then swung, splitting it in two. Gigan then took to the skies again and rocketed off, his systems quickly recovering from the attack.

Having just finished his stop in Africa, Gigan took a trip back to Yemen, a place where he hoped hoping to get some answers there. However, instead of answers, all he found was a country that had fallen back into the hands of nature a long time ago. All that remained of human civilization were the moss and fungus colonies that had clung to fallen buildings and retained their shape despite the fact that the very foundations of these buildings have long since eroded away. On the ground, he could see kaiju of all shapes and sizes roaming the land, foraging for food, fighting each other, and occasionally smashing what little remained of humankind's great cities.

Gigan was, to say the least, mortified by what he saw, and wondered how long he had been shut down for this to have happened. As he flew across the rest of the middle east, the same things awaited the cyborg giant. Decayed cities, monsters everywhere, not a soul in sight.

'What happened?' Gigan thought as he flew over the ghosts of humankind's cities. 'Where did everyone go? Even if Mothra was dead, surely Ymir would have-' he stopped his thought and paused in mid-air.

He remembered the titans he saw attacking the wall.

Those were Ymir's titans... right?

But then why would she be assisting in the destruction of humanity? Even given her past, persecuting people, especially those who couldn't protect themselves against her just wasn't the Ymir he knew. Surely humanity wouldn't be stupid enough to incur her wrath with him gone. Is it possible that Project: Atlas created another human-kaiju hybrid with her powers? Then why was it that apart from that one hairy guy, he couldn't find any titans anywhere besides that island? With all these thoughts rushing through Gigan's head, he had to take a seat to collect himself. As Gigan took a moment to calm down, one thought kept scratching at his brain, just begging to be answered.

'Where are you, Ymir?'

Meanwhile, late at night in the Trost district of wall Rose, soldiers guided a crowd of panicked refugees from wall Maria to safehouses after the incident two days ago, when the Colossal and Armored Titans took down Wall Maria overnight. Within the crowd, one soldier overlooks everything with a look of somber disbelief on his face. As he marches through the refugee camp, he overhears someone calling his name.

"KEITH! OVER HERE!" The voice called.

Keith Shadis turned around and saw Grisha Jaeger hurrying towards him with a panicked look on his face. Grisha soon stopped before the man and placed his hands on his knees to catch his breath. He began babbling incoherently, prompting Keith to place his hands on the doctor's shoulders.

"Settle down, Grisha," he said. "Just breathe, and tell me what you need."

Grisha huffed and panted, before eventually catching his breath. "Sorry. It's just... I know it may be selfish, given where we are but are Carla and the kids okay?"

"Not at all, Grisha. And, to answer your question, they're safe. Though, Carla's seen better days."

"W-what do you mean by that?"

"Well-"

"Grisha!" The two were interrupted by the happy call of Hannes as he joined in on their conversation. "Thank the walls you're here. I was worried you kicked the bucket when I didn't find you in the initial refugee group."

"Thank you for your concern Hannes," Grisha replied. "Now Keith, what happened to Carla?"

Hannes' face warped into an awkward expression while Keith told Grisha to follow him. He and Hannes lead Grisha to one of the many medical centers they had stationed around the refugee camp. Upon entering, Grisha found Mikasa and Eren napping by Carla, who was lying fast asleep in a medical cot. Hannes and Keith then explained to Grisha that during the attack on Shingonshina, both of Carla's legs were crushed and that Hannes and the kinds managed to save her when that mysterious flying monster came and lured the titans away. After she was transferred to a hospital, her legs were amputated sense they wouldn't heal properly and would get infected if left intact.

Grisha nodded and thanked Hannes for saving Carla's life, before approaching her while Hannes left Keith and Grisha, satisfied that he paid his debt for Grisha saving his wife's life all those years ago. Keith meanwhile smiled as he watched Grisha reunite with his family, Eren being the first to wake up and see his dad. Upon awakening, Eren proceeded to wake Carla and Mikasa up as well. Mikasa and Eren both hugged Grisha tightly, before Grisha's attention was turned to Carla, who held out her hand and gave him a weak, tired smile. Grisha immediately took her hand and rubbed his other hand against her cheek. The two then leaned in and shared a kiss. Seeing that the Jaeger family was busy with personal matters, Keith left as well, giving the family some privacy while he returned to his duties.

In the meantime, while Grisha was catching up with Carla on the lost time, Eren and Mikasa met up with Armin to share the good news with him. As the three talked, they listened in on rumors about the flying creature, some people being highly suspicious of its motives and origin, what with its otherworldly visage and sinister color scheme. Others however trusted that the monster had the best intentions for them, believing that its actions spoke for themselves. Eren however was simply curious about what that creature was and how humanity had never discovered such a creature. Even in Armin's books, nothing like it had ever been seen before What was

even more strange was that despite the beast looking like it was easily bigger than the Colossal Titan, it seemed passive towards humanity. This caused Eren to ponder about the creature.

Where did it come from? Had it always existed, or did it only appear when humanity was in danger? Were there others like it, or was it alone? If there were others like it, would they act like it, or would they be hostile just like the titans? So many questions, and no answers to any of them.

As Eren, Mikasa and Armin continued to hang out in front of the hospital, Grisha eventually came out, donning his coat and hat once again. He sighed softly as he saw Mikasa and Eren smiling at him, then took a knee in front of them.

"Eren, your mother is going back to sleep now," he said. "Be sure not to wake her. She still needs to rest after all. Also, both of you be sure to watch over her while I'm gone."

"W-what? You're leaving again?" Eren asked. "Why? Where are you even going this time!?" This outburst of emotion prompted a shoulder prod from Mikasa.

"Give him a break, Eren," Mikasa said. "Mom will be fine. Whatever he needs to do is probably just as important anyway."

Eren took offense to that, thinking nothing could be more important than making sure the people you love are safe, but he kept his lips sealed regardless, but then perked up when he heard the rest of what his dad had to say.

"Actually, Eren, I was planning on looking for a place for all of us to stay," he said. "We may have lost our old home, but we can still find a new one. So, while your mother is recovering, I'll be looking into finding a new home."

Eren took back what he said, realizing that his dad really did care about them. Eren hugged his father as thanks, Mikasa doing the

same. Grisha gave a shaky hug back, tears dripping down his face, as this moment was bitter-sweet for him. He knew what he was doing would be for the good of humanity, but the remorse he felt was still intense.

As Grisha hugged his kids, a robed figure stood in the corner, staring at the family, a look of vengeful anger in his eye. Despite his body still being in its prime, his eye told a different story. His withered, weary gaze gave off an aura only achievable by someone stewing in their own hatred and desire for revenge for decades. As some of the guards came by, the robed man slipped away into the shadows, waiting for his chance to strike and take his long-awaited revenge.

Later that night, Carla was sleeping soundly in her bed, feeling at ease and at peace for once in her life. However, she was stirred awake slightly and opened her eyes to see her husband standing over her son. Still mostly asleep, Carla didn't really register what they were saying before Grisha took Eren outside. It felt like only a few seconds until Eren returned, asleep and in the arms of an MP officer. Carla immediately became frightened when she saw him carrying Eren, asking him all sorts of questions like where her husband was and why her son was unconscious, but the man was unable to give any answers, as he simply found him unconscious in the woods with no one there with him. And with that, he left, leading Carla to wonder what could have happened to her son and husband.

Meanwhile, Gigan, having searched the entire world at this point with no answers as to Ymir's whereabouts, decided it would be best to return to the place he started, back on the island, as the other human colony seemed to be doing a fine enough job defending themselves for now. He did briefly check to see if the prison he, Ymir, and their other ally, Mothra, had created and dropped to the bottom of the ocean was still standing, and sure enough, it was. This wasn't surprising at all to Gigan. After all, if **he** did get out, Gigan absolutely would have noticed. He gave a sigh of relief nonetheless, and flew up out of the ocean and towards the island, landing in a forest comprised entirely of enormous trees so tall that they almost

reached Gigan's waist. But there was no time to stop and admire the trees, and he made his way to the walls to see how things were going.

As it turns out, not very well.

Gigan leaned over the wall and looked down on Shingonshina, only to find it completely overrun with Titans, the city destroyed and the streets running black with the dry blood of the people he failed to save that day. Gigan cursed under his breath, realizing the scale of his failure to protect these humans. Gigan's bright red visor began to glow with determination to never let this happen again. He reeled back, and then unleashed his eye beam down upon the titans below him, then flew up and swooped over wall Maria, where he saw that the damage extended throughout the entirety of the wall. So, Gigan charged his eye beam and prepared to fire again, when he was stopped by a voice from behind him.

[Stop.]

Gigan turned around and looked up. His eye widened as he saw a massive shadow blocking out the light of the full moon. A pair of purple, insectoid eyes illuminated the figure, as it's beating wings slowly carried it down to eye level with Gigan, allowing him to make out it's dark, regal form in full.

{M-Mothra?} Gigan questioned in his deep, soothing, yet synthetic voice.

[Neigh, my sister has yet to reincarnate,] the being replied. **[I am Battra.]**

Gigan was actually even more surprised by who it truly turned out to be. **{But I thought that you died back during the fall of America. How are you alive?}**

[That matters not. I have come to stop you from making a grave mistake.]

{And that would be?}

[Killing these titans.]

Gigan was confused and pressed Battra for details.

[Those titans, like all other kaiju, are under my protection. They cull the population of hairless apes, ensuring that they may never again bring ruin to this planet. You have already stoked my ire by interfering with their battle against the Meganula and Meganulons, extending the lifespans of Zeke Jaeger and Pieck Finger, and allowing the humans in Marley to expand their territory far beyond what I intended for them. I suggest that you do not stoke my ire any further by giving this set of humans a chance to recover.]

Gigan was revolted by what Battra was telling him, but attempted to hold back his contempt for the moment.

[I can tell that you are angered by this, however, I have a proposition for you.]

Gigan looked up curiously. **{What kind of proposition?}**

[I will allow you to protect the humans if you swear on you agree to never assist the humans in expanding further out in the world. You may kill monsters that encroach upon their territory and actively attempt to destroy them, however, any monsters outside of human territory are under my protection. If you strike them down, I will destroy the remaining human population, exterminating them once and for all. So, what do you say Gigan? Do we have a deal?]

Gigan wanted to decline the deal. No, more than that, he wanted Battra dead. But at the same time, he had no idea how strong he was. For all he knew, he could be just as powerful as **him**, and this deal was the only logical move he could make in this situation. And besides that, even if he weren't that powerful and were only as

strong as his sister, he would still have no trouble making good on that threat. At least this way, he could still make sure no one else had to die. With heavy reluctance, Gigan accepted Battr's deal. And with that, Battr flew off into the sky and disappeared into the night. Gigan looked back somberly at the walls and sighed before flying away as well.

After a year and a half, Carla was released from the hospital, being guided out the front door in a wheelchair by her son, Eren, and her adopted daughter, Mikasa. The three were led by Hannes to a house that Grisha left for them before disappearing, where the Jaeger family was able to settle down, with Eren and Mikasa spending most of their time taking care of Carla the same way she did for them before everything went to hell. In the year 846, an operation to retake Wall Maria commenced, costing many a life in the process, including Armin's grandfather. With nowhere else to go, Armin moved into the Jaeger household as well. One morning, while Eren, Mikasa, and Armin were in the market, they saw a flyer advertising that the Cadet Corps taking in new recruits and this news reinvigorated Eren's previously tempered headstrong, freedom-seeking spirit. He quickly snatched it up and brought it home with him. Once home, he began discussing it with Armin and Mikasa.

"Guys, this is my chance!" Eren said as he held the flyer with an ecstatic look on his face. "I have to join!"

"No, you can't, Eren," Mikasa interjected. "Especially not when we still have to look after mom."

"But this is what I've been waiting for; a chance to finally take back the home we lost!" Eren then looked to Armin. "Come on, Armin! Back me up here!"

Armin awkwardly rubbed his arm. "As much as I want to, Mikasa's right. We're the only ones your mom has right now. We can't just leave her all alone."

"Not to mention it's too dangerous." Everyone turned around and saw Carla enter the living room in her wheelchair. "I can't believe you still haven't given up on the damn scouts, even after you saw what the titans are capable of."

Eren stood up and protested this.

"What the hell else am I supposed to do!? Just sit around and hope it doesn't happen again!? You're right mom, I have seen what they can do, and that's why I'm going to make sure they never do it again! If dad were here, he'd agree with me-"

"Well he's not!" Carla shouted. Eren flinched as he saw tears begin to roll down his mother's cheeks. "I can't bare the thought of you out there in that cold, brutal world, constantly wondering if you'll be okay out there, or when you'll come back. What happens if you die out there, and I never get to see you again? Do you want me to have to go through that?"

Eren's face softened into a look of guilt. He approached his mother and held her hand while she continued.

"Your father is gone, and I don't know if he'll ever come back... I can't let the same thing happen to you. So please, don't throw your life away."

Before Eren could respond, everyone heard a sudden knock on the door. Armin went to answer it, and upon opening the door, it was revealed that it was Keith Shadis, arms crossed behind his back and dressed in a new uniform.

"Good afternoon," he said. "I'm sorry to disturb you all, but I came by to see Carla." Carla composed herself and then wheeled her way over to the door while Eren took a seat on the couch and let out an audible sigh.

"Keith? I didn't know you were coming over," Carla said.

"I was on my way home, but noticed your house on the way, so I thought I'd stop by to let you all know that I was retiring from the Scouts. My second in command, Erwin Smith, is the new commander."

Everyone was taken aback by this, Carla especially. While it was common for a Survey Corps commander to die on the battlefield and the role of commander to go to the second in command, Keith was probably the first commander in history to voluntarily step down. Although the family was relieved that nothing bad happened to their friend, they did wonder what caused him to make such a decision.

"Well, since you took your time to come here, why not join us for lunch? We can discuss it there if you like."

"Thank you, Carla."

Keith then helped Eren, Carla and Mikasa set up the dining room table while Armin cooked. Once they all sat down together, Keith noticed the rather gloomy atmosphere in the room, as well as Eren's dejected expression. Carla eventually broke up the atmosphere by continuing their topic from earlier.

"So, Keith, what are you going to do now that you aren't a part of the Survey corps?"

"Well, I decided to become an instructor for the Cadet Corps," he said as he ate a spoonful of the soup Armin made. "Speaking of which, I was wondering if any of you three were planning on joining."

Everyone stopped eating for a moment, and the gloomy atmosphere returned, this time even thicker and more oppressive than before. Keith was a tad confused until Carla spoke up again, her words this time doing nothing to ease the situation.

"No, they won't be joining. It's too risky for them out there."

"Oh, that's not a problem. I was actually thinking they'd join the Brigade or Military Police."

"No!" Carla slammed her fist on the table, startling everyone, including Keith. She huffed and panted for a moment, before placing a hand on her forehead. "No. None of them. I want them here, and that's that."

Keith silenced himself after seeing Carla snap like that. He noticed Eren gripping his fork tightly, before eventually settling down on his own and returning to his gloomy expression. Once everyone finished, Carla alone escorted Keith out of the house while everyone else cleaned up.

Outside, Keith and Carla took a moment to talk.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to offend you earlier."

"No, I'm sorry for blowing up at you," she said. "It's just, you have to understand, Eren and the others... they're all I have left. With Grisha gone, I can't afford to lose them."

"And with them gone, there will be no one left to care for you. I understand," Keith then took a knee before Carla. "But I must ask you this: could you at least give Eren the chance to fight for his home, for his people, and for you?"

Carla wanted to argue but chose to keep listening and see where Keith was going with this.

"I will do my best to train your children so that they are capable of defending you and themselves from any threat. I will also make sure you are not alone, and arrange for someone to look after you while the kids complete their training."

"B-but Keith, you know Eren! He'll certainly join the Survey Corps, and you of all people know how few of them return after an expedition."

Keith held her hand and looked her straight in the eyes. "Believe me when I say that the Survey Corps are in better hands. You see, I stepped down because I knew that Erwin would do a far better job as Commander than I would. He had already proven himself a far superior leader than I, and with his leadership and guidance, I guarantee you that Eren will be safe." Keith then stood up, still holding her hand. "That is if you will allow your son the chance to fight for everyone and everything he cares for. If you allow him to fight to protect you." Finally, Keith let go of Carla's hand and placed his hands in his pockets. "Just think about it."

And with that, Keith left. His heart was racing, for that was possibly the hardest thing he had ever done in his life, harder even than fighting the titans. However, regardless of what happened next, Keith was confident that he made the right choice.

Carla meanwhile was left absolutely speechless, and just spent a while sitting on the porch thinking about Keith's speech. After a while, everyone was done cleaning up the table, and Carla went back inside. She called Eren to follow her, and the two went to his room, shutting the door behind them. Armin and Mikasa looked at each other and decided to eavesdrop on their conversation, standing just outside their room, wondering what would happen.

Eren took a seat on his bed and began the conversation, saying, "Mom, there's no reason for me to lecture me right now. You've already made it clear that you don't want us joining the Cadet Corps."

"I'm not giving you a lecture Eren," Carla said. She then took a deep breath before saying, "I'm giving you my blessing."

Eren's eyes widened and he scooted to the edge of his bed as his mom continued.

"Eren, do you love your family?"

"O-ofcourse!"

Carla then held out her hands and placed them on his shoulders, her eyes misty with tears welling up in them. "Then please, promise me that you'll fight to survive for me, for Mikasa, for Armin... and for your father."

"W-wait, mom, what are you saying?"

"I'm saying... that I shouldn't be holding you back. I shouldn't keep trying to protect you on my own, especially not when I'm in this condition. I want you to become stronger, however, you can, so that..." Carla choked up a bit before continuing. "So that you can protect me, and everyone else."

Eren was shocked at the words his mother was saying. What had caused her to change her mind so suddenly, and so drastically?

"But what about you? Aren't you worried about being alone if I'm gone?"

"I'm more worried about you. About not giving you a chance to fight to take our home back... to fight for the sake of your family."

Carla lowered her hands slowly, and Eren quickly grabbed hold of both of them.

"But... promise me that if you go, you'll bring Mikasa and Armin with you. I want you to be with the people who care about you so that you all can look after each other."

Eren stuttered and stammered, trying to find the right thing to say. Carla simply smiled and wiped some tears from his eyes.

"It's okay, Eren. I love you, and... if it truly is your dream to leave the walls one day, then all I ask is to still be a part of your life no matter what happens."

"O-of course, mom! You'll always be a part of my life!" Eren cried out with tears running down his face as he wrapped his arms around

Carla in a tight embrace. "I love you too, mom... and I promise, I'll fight for you, and for everyone else, until the day I die."

Carla returned the embrace and began to cry as well. "I know you will Eren."

The two then heard Armin and Mikasa crying just outside the room after listening in on the whole thing. Eren stood up and let them into the room, and the four all joined in for a group hug, as the friends all proclaimed to Carla that they would do their best in the Cadet Corps. Carla smiled at the sight of the three and wished them the best of luck out there.

Later that night, Eren lie on his bed, reminiscing about all the times when he, Mikasa, and Armin talked about journeying to the outside world back when they were in Shinganshina. Finally, that dream of theirs would become a reality, and he would make sure that there was nothing that would get in the way of that dream. With a smile on his face, Eren slowly closed his eyes and began to drift off to sleep.

{I'm sorry... }

Eren jolted upwards when he heard a strange voice echo through his mind. He looked around the room to find the source of it but to no avail.

{I wish there were more I could do.}

There it was again. Eren wasn't sure if he had just gotten too excited about Carla letting him join the Cadets that his mind started playing tricks with him, but then, why was he hearing those words? And what was that voice? He had never heard it before in his life.

"Who's there?" Eren called.

{Hugh? Who said that?}

"Who are you?"

{Are you a kaiju?}

"A what? And you didn't answer my question!" Eren got in a defensive stance. "You'd better start talking right now! Who are you, and how did you get in my house?!"

{House...? Wait, are you... a human?!}

Eren lowered his guard a bit in confusion. "Uhhh... yeah?"

{But that's impossible. The only humans that could talk to kaiju were the Kaiju-human hybrids. Unless... }

"DAMN IT! WHY THE HELL AREN'T YOU ANSWERING MY DAMN QUESTIONS!?" Eren slammed his fist on his bedside table before letting out an enraged yell to the mysterious voice. "EITHER TELL ME WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU'RE DOING IN MY HOUSE, OR I SWEAR, I'M GONNA-"

{I'm not in your house!} The voice shouted back. This gave Eren pause, however, he quickly brushed that off.

"Yeah, alright. Then how come I can hear you, dumbass?"

{Hmmm... how can I show this to you without it sounding like a lie...?} The voice pondered for a moment, making Eren's frustration rise until suddenly, the voice came up with an idea. **{Okay, where are you?}**

Eren rolled his eyes and began giving his street name, but the voice corrected him, saying he was looking for the district. Once Eren told the voice he was in Trost, the voice began making its way to the district it remembered being referred to as "Trost."

{I'm here. Now, come outside to a place that's clear of any trees.}

"And what if this is a trap?"

{Bring a weapon with you if it makes you feel more comfortable.}

With that suggestion in mind, Eren became a bit less suspicious that this voice was that of a kidnapper or burglar since it would be awfully stupid of one of them to suggest that you bring a weapon. Eren left his room and went to the kitchen, grabbing a knife from the utensil drawer, then carefully approached his front door, knife at the ready, as he unlocked the door with a gentle click, then slowly opened the door with a loud creak. His eyes slowly adjusted to the darkness outside As he took one careful step after another off of the porch.

"Now what?" He said softly, hoping to not wake the neighbors.

{Look up at the moon.} The ground seemingly rumbled when the voice spoke this time. Eren did as he was told and looked up at the moon curiously. As soon as he did, all doubt and frustration Eren had given way to utter shock and astonishment.

Hovering in front of the full moon, Eren saw the giant monster that saved his mother's life all those years ago, the backlight of the moon keeping him in silhouette as he flew above Trost.

Carla, Mikasa, and Armin soon came out, having been awoken by Eren's outburst earlier, as well as him suddenly leaving the house. However, they were all left as slackjawed as Eren when they saw the giant savior hovering above them.

{And to answer your question, my name is Gigan.}

Author's note: This story derives heavily from the fanfiction Enemies of Humanity's past, and this episode especially derives heavily from it. I do not approve plagiarism, and I have tried to make changes to certain scenes so that I'm not just copy pasting entire scenes from Enemies of Humanity's past, however if you believe that they weren't enough to not be considered plagiarizing it, please let me know what I should change about this episode.

**As a show of good faith, here is a link to the story:
s/13830752/... Chapter 2 is most relevant here, so I advise that
you compare this chapter to that.**

The road ahead is a harsh one

It had been several weeks since Eren, Mikasa and Armin had applied for the 104th cadet corps, and they were all preparing to leave for the corps. However, before they said goodbye to Carla, the three decided to stick around and wait for the caretaker that Keith Shadis said was coming, who was supposed to be here today. While waiting, Eren was lying on his bed, reminiscing over the years that had led up to this point. The fall of wall Maria, his mother's legs being crushed, the pictures Armin showed him and Mikasa of the outside world, all of it fueled his drive to wipe out all the titans with his bare hands. However that wasn't all he was doing while waiting. He was also having a conversation with a new friend of his.

{Hey Eren,} Gigan said. {How come you never told your family about me?}

Eren rolled over on his side as he replied, "Well, what am I supposed to tell them? That I suddenly started hearing a voice in my head one night, and that said voice belongs to you?"

{Fair point... So, you never did tell me how you gained hybrid powers.}

"That's because I still have no idea what you're talking about when you mention it! Even when you explained it to me, it still doesn't make any sense, because I'm not 'part monster,' I'm all human! I always have been!"

{Okay, okay, I'm sorry. You don't need to get so aggressive with me.}

Eren sighed. "I'm sorry. I'm just really frustrated is all. That caretaker should have been here by now, and I have no idea why he isn't."

Meanwhile, a young man was riding down the road in a carriage. He was sent out by his colleague, Keith Shadis, to go care for a woman named Carla Jaeger while her children were out training in the 104th cadet corps. While he was riding however, his horse suddenly stopped in its tracks when a man in a cloak suddenly stepped in front of the carriage.

"Excuse me," the young man said. "I'm on official business here, could you please move out the way?"

The cloaked man remained silent. The young man grumbled and got off his carriage to scold the mystery man in person, when suddenly, a strange mist began to surround him, scaring the horse in the process. A hand suddenly lurched out of the mist and grabbed the caretaker by the collar, and he stared in horror as the mist itself began to take the shape of a man. The man made of mist glared daggers at the caretaker, however the cloaked man suddenly held out his hand, prompting the man of mist to drop the caretaker, then float over to the cloaked man's side and take on a fully human form.

The cloaked man walked over to the caretaker and removed his hood, revealing his black hair, soul piercing stare, and black eyepatch. He then crouched before the caretaker and leaned in close before speaking in a calm and ominous tone.

"I'm sorry, but I will be caring for Carla Jaeger from here on," he said. "Now run along. We're done here."

"Y-y-y-yes sir!"

The caretaker quickly hopped back on his horse and rode off back the way he came at high speeds. The man with the eyepatch and his superpowered associate looked at each other, both amazed at how cooperative the man was, but grateful for the lack of any scuffle nonetheless. The man with the eyepatch nodded to his associate, who proceeded to turn back into his vapor state and disappear into the woods while he began walking down the path.

As the sun set on the city of Trost, the impatience in the Jaeger household was no longer exclusive to Eren. Mikasa, Armin, and even Carla, were also beginning to wonder what was taking the caretaker so long to get there. Even if he were arriving all the way from the other side of Trost, it shouldn't be taking him this long to get here. Thankfully, a knock was eventually heard on their front door. Eren went to open it, and sure enough, the man at the door introduced himself as Carla's caretaker.

"It's about time! What the hell took you so long?!" Eren shouted, "This had better not be a pattern for you when you're taking care of my mom!"

"Eren! Don't be so rude," Carla chastized as wheeled herself up to the door so she could greet the man herself. "I'm sorry, sir. He's just tense about my well-being."

"Oh no, that's perfectly fine. I understand. I was delayed on my way here."

"Well, I would like to thank you for taking the time to care for me until my children return. Mister...?"

"Serizawa," He said. "Daisuke Serizawa."

Carla welcomed Serizawa into their home and introduced him to Armin and Mikasa, who showed him to the room he would be residing in. After getting Serizawa settled in, Eren, Mikasa and Armin said their goodbyes to Carla and then departed for training. As they disappeared into the distance, Serizawa wheeled Carla back inside.

After unpacking his belongings, Serizawa prepared to make lunch for Carla, who decided to take this opportunity to get to know her caretaker.

"So,, how long have you and Keith known eachother?"

Serizawa hesitated a bit before replying, "Um... not that long actually. He and I only just met recently infact, so I was a bit surprised when he came to me."

"Well, it's not like there were many other people to take care of me. I'm grateful that Keith was able to send someone over."

"I do find it rather peculiar that Grisha wouldn't be here. You'd think he'd want to be by his wife's side at all times."

"Oh? You know my husband?"

Serizawa flinched slightly. He was relieved that he was cooking with his back turned to Carla, as he was able to hide his reaction.

"W-well, Keith told me about him before I came over. I had also heard of his work as a doctor in Shiganshina."

"He certainly was something. I remember when a plague swept through Shingonshina and he alone managed to save everyone. Including my parents and myself."

Just leave out some of the specifics of how he was able to save her and her parents.

"You know, I'm not exactly a doctor, not anymore at least, but I do have some experience in medicine myself."

"Really?" Carla wheeled herself closer, "Keith didn't mention that you specialized in that field."

"That's because like I said, I'm not a doctor anymore. I've unfortunately had to give up on that life due to circumstances beyond my control," he said as he placed a hand on his eyepatch. "I am a scientist though, and I do still have the knowledge I've obtained from years of being a medical professional." He then looked down at Carla and an idea popped into his head. "Speaking of which, I could probably make something for your amputated legs."

Carla giggles, "Make what? Something for me to walk again."

"Why, yes in fact, I can," he then turned back to the meal he was cooking. "I'll start tomorrow once I'm able to gather supplies."

"W-wait, you actually can?"

Meanwhile, the man made of mist, whose real name was Huang Meng, floated above Trost, Mist from the hips down and human from the waist up, mapping out the area for any landmarks, any points of interest, any markets to get food and other such amenities, and crucially, potential hiding spots for his and Serizawa's target, Grisha Jaeger. And so far he has found none of that final category. No matter how hard Huang looked, he couldn't find where Grisha could be hiding from them. It was like after the night that they saw him visit Carla at the hospital, he just dropped off the face of the Earth.

While exploring the city, and avoiding the prying eyes of the public, he noticed a group of kids approaching the gates into Rose. He recognized the three from that day that Grisha visited Carla, realizing that it was Eren, Mikasa, and Armin, older but still clearly young, maybe 15 to 16 years old.

'Wait, I thought they'd be at least 18 if they're leaving so soon,' Huang thought as he saw them leave. 'Is the military really accepting child soldiers? How bad have things gotten after Ymir died?'

Although Huang wanted to follow them to find out more about what was going on in the military, he refrained from doing so, as he still needed to complete the job Serizawa set out for him. However, before Huang could get back to that, he heard someone screaming down below. After weighing his options, he decided that going to check that out wouldn't take too long, and would be a much less egregious distraction than following Eren, Mikasa and Armin all the way to the Cadet Corps training camp.

Huang landed by the river, where he saw a man being held at knifepoint by a group of thugs trying to mug him. Huang knew he

couldn't just let this man get mugged, as Serizawa would be disappointed in him if he did, but he couldn't just use his powers on them, as the entirety of the Military Police and Garrison would likely want to dissect him if they found out about him. So he was going to have to rely on his own skills in hand-to-hand combat here.

The man reached into his pocket and pulled out all the money that he had on him, hoping it would satisfy them, however, the muggers decided that they couldn't have him running to the Military police and telling them about him. One of them then pinned him against the wall, about to slit his throat, however, he was distracted when he heard the other two grunting in pain behind him.

He turned around and saw Huang fighting off two muggers at once using nothing but what he had around him. He ducked and weaved out of the way of their slashes and stabs, then struck at every opening, he could find, even bashing one of them in the head with a rock, dazing him and leaving him on the ground briefly while he focused on the other one. The main guy dropped his victim and pulled out a second knife, telling both his men to back off. As the two moved away, the third one, who was seemingly their boss, looked down on Huang with a sinister grin on his face.

"You got some skills there, runt," he said, mocking the man's short stature. "I must say, I'm impressed. Name's Charles, and you?" He said in a disengenuously welcoming tone.

"Meng," he replied with a stern look on his face.

"Nice to meet you, Meng. I might actually remember killing you."

Huang dodged out of the way as Charles slashed at him, then went on the defensive as the two duked it out. Huang did his best to maneuver around his much taller foe but did receive the occasional cut and scratch from the knives. After a while, Huang was able to disarm Charles and force him to fight him hand to hand, which made the fight much more even, as Huang was able to use his hand-to-hand combat training to its fullest, attacking relentlessly and

mercilessly while giving Charles, who by comparison had no formal training whatsoever, no opportunity to fight back.

Eventually, Huang was able to leg sweep Charles and send him toppling to the ground, and then climb on top of Charles. Huang then proceeded to pummel his enemy relentlessly, blood oozing out of Charles' nose and onto Huang's fists and he slammed them down again and again. However, just as Huang was about to beat Charles to death, he was suddenly stabbed in the back by one of Charles' men. Huang fell to the ground in agony as the blade sank into his spine and blood began to gush from his mouth. He toppled over onto the ground and his ears began to ring and his vision became blurry. Huang clenched his eyes shut in frustration as he knew what he'd have to do to survive.

Just before he did though, his eyes widened as he heard Charles strangling the guy that stabbed him. While he couldn't hear it clearly, he could tell that he was apparently mad that the goon stole the greatest fight he'd ever had from him. Huang then narrowed his eyes and activated his powers. The knife within him suddenly fell to the ground and Huang began to rise up off the ground, his back surrounded by vapor, and his ripped up, bloodstained coat falling to the ground as all his injuries began to heal. Charles looked back at this display and smiled with astonishment.

"Well I'll be," he said with an excited smile on his bloodied face. "Looks like our fight ain't over yet."

"No." Huang held out his hand, which suddenly became a massive cloud of vapor that blasted out with enough force to slam Charles into a brick wall and then pin him there. "It is."

Huang then tightened the vapor cloud so much that it crushed Charles' entire torso, killing him instantly. He then finished what Charles started, suffocating the goon that tried to kill him, before looking to the third goon who was on the ground trembling. He slowly floated closer to the goon, then pressed his forehead against his.

"Tell anyone what you just saw, and I'll do the same to you."

The goon nodded meekly and crawled away while babbling nonsensically.

Huang sighed and looked around, realizing that the person he was defending was already gone, likely having left while he was fighting Charles. Huang sighed and flew back up into the sky minutes before the MPs could arrive to see what had happened. While flying away, Huang chastised himself mentally, wondering what Ymir would have thought of him if she saw what he had become.

"HEY, MOPTOP!"

"Sir!" Armin responded with a salute.

It had been a few days since Eren and the other had arrived at the training camp, and they were going through the initiation ceremony. Keith Shadis, their family friend and now instructor, had intentionally skipped over Mikasa and Eren, knowing that this was nothing to them, but he knew that Armin was more delicate than those two, so this routine would be needed for someone like him.

"What do they call you, maggot?"

"Armin Arlert, from Shingonshina, sir!"

"Wow, seriously? Why would your parents curse you with such a dumb name?"

"It was my grandfather's sir!"

Shadis leaned in close and raised his voice once more. "Cadet Arlert, what is a runt like you doing here?!"

"I want to help humanity overcome the titan scourge, sir!"

"That is delightful to hear! You'll make a nice snack for them!" Shadis placed a hand on Armin's head and turned the boy around. "ABOUT

FACE, MAGGOT!"

Keith went around, sharing similar treatment with most of the other cadets, but skipping over the ones who have clearly seen what the titans can do firsthand. This next recruit was not one of those people.

"WHAT DO WE HAVE OVER HERE!?"

"JEAN KIRSTEIN, SIR! FROM THE TROST DISTRICT!"

"AND WHY ARE YOU HERE CADET!?"

"To join the military police! The best of the best!"

"That's nice... so, you wanna live in the interior I take it?"

"Yes, si-" Jean was then headbutted by Keith and fell to his knees while clutching his forehead.

"NO ONE TOLD YOU TO SIT RECRUIT! IF YOU CAN'T HANDLE THIS THEN YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT JOINING THE MILITARY POLICE!"

Not by a long shot.

After a few more recruits, however, he happened upon one recruit that one unlike any of the others. She wasn't very noteworthy physically. Brown hair wrapped into a ponytail, average height, bit on the skinny side, but not by much. It'd be hard to single her out in this crowd was it not for one thing in her hand. A potato. A potato that she was currently in the process of eating. Keith dropped the soldier he was scolding while in a state of utter disbelief as he just stared at her.

"Hey, you. What do you think you're doing?"

The girl did not reply. Instead, she opened her mouth and took another bite of her potato.

"YOU ARE OFFICIALLY ON MY SHIT LIST! WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!?"

The girl gulped down the chunk of potato in her mouth and then saluted him, the potato right over her heart.

"SASHA BRAUS FROM DAUPER VILLAGE, SIR!" She shouted back at him.

"Sasha Braus, huh? Tell me, what's that in your hand?"

"A STEAMED POTATO! IT SAT THERE IN THE MESS HALL BEGGING TO BE EATEN, SIR!"

"The theft, I understand, but why eat it here of all places?"

"It looked quite delicious, and it was getting cold, so I gave it shelter in my stomach, sir!" She said this without a hint of humor in her tone. This girl seemed to genuinely think that this was the correct response to the question as if she somehow didn't hear the part where Keith said "here of all places".

Keith's fist tightened behind his back as he held back with... not anger, but utter bewilderment and disbelief as he tried desperately to understand her logic. "Why?" he asked. "I can't understand, why are you eating that potato?"

Sasha raised an eyebrow. "Are you asking why people eat potatoes? I'm surprised you don't know, sir."

Everyone was staring at Sasha, in a mix of awe and shock at her brazen idiocy in the face of their instructor. Said instructor was now absolutely livid and glaring daggers at her. Sasha then had an idea to ease the situation and broke off a small piece of the potato before handing it to Keith.

"Here sir, have half," She said with reluctance. Keith took the potato and just stared at it.

"Have half? Really?"

Sasha gave him a slight smile in response.

Hours later, Eren, Armin, and a few other cadets, Connie Springer, Marco Bodt, and Mina Carolina, were watching as Sasha ran around the entire camp again and again. Eren commented on how she didn't seem nearly as bothered by this as losing meal privileges. While they were watching her, they noticed the dropout carriage carrying them away, and Armin was surprised that there was already one.

"It's only been one day," Armin said.

"That's how it is," Eren replied. "If you can't handle the pressure, you gotta leave." He then scoffed at their decision. "I can't believe anyone would rather pull plants than fight."

"Hey, I know about some of us, but you never mentioned where you were from, Eren," Marco commented, prompting Eren to pat his lifelong friend on the shoulder.

"The same as Armin. Shingonsina."

"Oh wow..." Marco said with a shaky tone of voice. "That means..."

"You saw it," Connie said. "The Colossal one. You were there that day, did you see him?"

"Yeah. I did."

Later at lunch, Eren was bombarded with questions about all the strange things that happened that day.

"So, was it true that there was a flying titan that drove away the other titans?" Marco asked Eren. "The same one that appeared over Trost again last night?"

"It was definitely bigger than the 'Colossal' Titan, but it definitely wasn't one. It was more like some metal dragon thing," he replied

while eating his dinner. "And it was less like he scared them away, and more like he lured them away with a weird noise he was making."

"A dragon? I've heard of dragons in fairy tales when I was a kid, but never thought they were real," Connie said.

"And the Armored titan?" Mina asked. "The one that broke through Wall Maria?"

"Is that what they called it? In the confusion, it just looked like another titan to me."

Everyone was amazed, and one person spoke up and asked what they were like. That question made Eren think back to that horrible day, with all the titans slaughtering the people like animals. The horror of it all made Eren cover his mouth as he felt the urge to vomit. However, after hearing them trying to apologize, he attempted to put on a brave face in front of them all.

"Those stupid titans. They're really not that big a deal. If we focus on mastering the Omnidirectional Mobility Gear they give us, then it's titan payback time," Eren said. "I've waited years for this day, and all of a sudden, the reality is sinking in: I'm gonna join the Scout Regiment, and then I'll send the titans back to hell. I'm gonna butcher them all..."

'Not just that,' Eren thought. 'But I also have a secret weapon. With Gigan on my side, the two of us will be unstoppable. We'll show the titans what happens when man and kaiju work together, and take back the world that they stole. A knight fighting alongside a dragon to slay giants. Bet your bedtime stories never told you that one, Connie.' However, Eren's train of thought was interrupted by another person speaking up from the other side of the mess hall.

"Hey, are you crazy?" Jean asked with a hint of smugness in his voice. "Not that it's any of my business, but isn't signing up for the survey corps kind of like a death wish?"

Eren sat up and turned his attention entirely over to Jean. "I guess we'll see. Or at least I will. You seem content to hide in the interior with the MPs."

"Look, I'm just being honest here. I think it's better than being some loud-mouthed, braggadocious, tough guy wannabe who's pretending he's not as piss scared as the rest of us."

Eren got up from his table and glared down at Jean. "Are you trying to pick a fight?"

Jean shrugged. "Alright, sure. It makes no difference to me."

The cadets gathered around the two as they stood off against each other. Armin tried to encourage them to stop, but his pleas were drowned out by everyone else in the mess hall egging them on. Thankfully, before any blows could be shared, the bell rang, signifying the end of dinner. Jean sighed softly before holding his hand out to Eren.

"Hey, I'm sorry," he said with a calm smile. "It was wrong of me to call you names and dismiss your choice of career. We good?"

"Yeah, I guess we're good..." Eren replied, not returning the smile, but returning the handshake. He then left with Armin, and Mikasa was soon to follow them.

As Mikasa passed by Jean, he found himself enamored by her beauty, unable to take her eyes off her. Before she could leave, he approached her and began stammering incoherently, before finally blurting out, "You have really pretty hair..."

"Thanks," she replied. She then left.

As she walked away, Jean rushed outside in hopes that he had a chance with her, only to see Mikasa talking to Eren. They were still close enough that he was able to hear what the two were saying.

"I can't believe you let your emotions get the better of you, Eren," Mikasa said. "You almost started a fight on your first day here! What would mom think of this?"

"You don't need to tell her about this," he replied. "She doesn't need more things to worry about."

Mikasa stopped and grabbed his hand, holding him in place.

"Eren, I promised your mother that I would look after you. I don't want you to think that I'm constantly meddling in your business just because I want to, because I'm not. I'm just trying to honor your mother's wishes."

"I know, I know! But if I am to fight for you, mom, and the rest of humanity, I need to be stronger, and that means being able to do things by myself."

Mikasa sighed. "Alright, I won't say anything this time. Just... remember why we're here and who we're doing this for, okay?"

Eren gave her a nod of reassurance. "I will. Thanks for talking some sense into me. She'd be proud if she were here to see that."

Mikasa blushed slightly at that and smiled softly. Jean's heart sank watching their interaction, and it only sank further down as their conversation continued. As the two were walking away, Eren noted that Mikasa's hair would probably get in the way of ODM training, and that she should cut it, to which she agreed.

As Jean watched this interaction, Connie walked by him. Without saying a word or even looking at Connie, he silently rubbed his hand on the back of his jacket.

"GAH!" Connie shouted as he started reaching at his back. "WHAT THE HELL!? What'd you rub on me?!"

As Connie continued to struggle, Jean just muttered, "my pride..."

Later that night, while everyone else was asleep in their cabins, Sasha was huffing and heaving as she stumbled her way to the nearest lit torch, having finally finished running across the entire camp. After reaching the small circle of light, she collapsed onto her stomach, seemingly unconscious and drenched from head to toe in sweat. However, as someone began approaching her from the darkness, Sasha's eyes snapped open and she lunged towards the person like a starving animal.

The girl approaching Sasha fell on her butt, then watched in utter terror as Sasha began eating the bread she was holding with only her teeth while standing on all fours. Eventually, Sasha came back to her "senses" when she realized what she had in her mouth.

"IT'S BREAD!" She screamed, startling the short blonde girl watching her.

"I-I'm sorry there isn't more," the girl said. "It was all I could take besides this water."

Sasha stared at the girl in astonishment as she offered her some of the water, then got down in front of her and began praising her like a goddess. As she screamed, a third girl approached the two with one eyebrow raised.

"Hey, what are you two doing?" She asked while rubbing one eye. "You're gonna wake up the whole camp if you keep screaming like that."

"S-sorry Ymir," the smallest of the trio said. "I just wanted to give her something to eat because she was running for so long."

"I see," Ymir said. "So you're trying to be nice, Christa?"

As she said that, Sasha fell over into Christa's lap and began to fall asleep.

"What's the point of breaking the rules for potato girl? That act of mindless kindness gets you nowhere."

Christa stayed silent.

Ymir sighed. "Whatever, let's just get her to bed." Ymir then lifted Sasha up over her shoulders.

"W-wait, I'm confused. Aren't you being nice by doing that?"

"Nah. I'm helping her so that she'll owe me one in the future."

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the camp, Eren was sitting alone behind his barracks. He slightly overheard what was going on because of Sasha's screaming, but he was more focused on a conversation he was currently having with someone else.

"So, Gigan, I've been wondering, why do you help humans?"

{Well, that's... kind of a long story. Too long to tell you right now. What I will say, is that it has to do with an ancient human civilization that sank into the ocean centuries before I became what I am today.}

That answer only left Eren with even more questions. Gigan was from the ocean? There was a human civilization that sank into the ocean? How did it get to the ocean in the first place? How did it sink? So many questions... but Gigan was right. There was no time to answer them all. As they spoke, he could feel himself drifting off to sleep where he sat.

{I'll tell you more about it some other time. For now, you should get some sleep. You have training to do tomorrow, and I have patrol to do tomorrow.}

Eren yawned and nodded, wishing Gigan a goodnight before going back into his cabin, being careful so as not to wake up his roommates.

Meanwhile, Gigan made one last trip around wall Maria to make sure that there were no breaches for titans to get through, and silently wished that Battraweren't a factor so that he could slaughter them all. After finding no breaches in Wall Rose, Gigan took a seat in the middle of a titan forest and went to sleep. It had been so long time since he had a true nap, not counting the 20,000-year coma he was in. Folds of metal draped over Gigan's visor as all of his non-essential systems shut down and he began to drift off to sleep.

Come the next morning, the day of ODM training had begun. Keith informed the students in no uncertain terms that there was no place for those who couldn't perform. If the students failed, they would be shipped to the fields. The majority of candidates immediately got the hang of it. Some were struggling a bit more than others, but all of them were shown to be apt in the use of the ODM gear. All accept one... Eren.

"WHAT IS YOUR MAJOR MALFUNCTION, JAEGER!?" Keith shouted as Eren hung upside down, dangling back and forth. All of the cadets were shocked at Eren's incompetence, some of them snickering to themselves, others felt pity, but most were just wondering how anyone could be this bad with the gear.

'Why am I...? What do I...? How do I work this thing? This can't be happening!'

Eren continued to attempt to practice with the ODM equipment, with Mikasa and Armin trying to give him advice on how to use it properly. Despite their attempts to help, however, he continued to fail, fall, and hit his head again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and aga-

Crack! "GYAAAAAH!" Eren screamed as he felt Mikasa squeeze his shoulder to get his attention.

"Stressing yourself out won't solve anything," Armin said. "You still have time to practice tomorrow."

Armin's words of encouragement fell on deaf ears, as Eren simply wallowed in his own self-pity.

"I'm pathetic," Eren said. "How am I supposed to be strong enough for my mom if I can't even stand up straight with ODM?"

"You don't have to," Mikasa answered. "Your mom would be happy knowing you could come back to her sooner-"

"YOU DON'T GET IT!" Eren slammed his fist onto the table in frustration. "The whole point of this was so that I could protect **her** for once instead of the other way around, by making this world a safe place for all of us to live freely, without fear of the titans wiping us out the moment we step out of our cage! She might be happy knowing that I got kicked out, but I'd never forgive myself for this failure."

"And I'm saying you don't need to do so. She wouldn't care either way if you get kicked out or kill them all. She just wants her son to be alive and be there for her."

In the middle of Mikasa's own speech, the lunch bell rang, and Eren and Armin decided that they could seek help from the other cadets. Meanwhile, Mikasa just kept talking.

"Please, understand, I won't let you return to the fields by yourself. Because wherever you go, I'll go with yo-" As Mikasa turned to look at Eren and give a dramatic conclusion to her speech, she saw Sasha sitting next to her, her mouth hanging open slightly as she was at a loss for words.

Mikasa, having lost her appetite at this humiliating mistake, didn't even give Sasha the time to say anything. She shoved a loaf of bread into the girl's mouth and then left, using her scarf to cover the blush creeping onto her cheeks. Sasha hummed happily as she feasted upon the bread that, in her eyes, was given to her.

Who knew she'd meet so many generous people here?

While Eren was desperately trying to find someone to help him learn how to use the ODM gear, across the world, his super-powered cyborg companion, Gigan, was still on the hunt for Ymir, this time visiting Antarctica, thinking maybe she hid there so no one would find her. Deep in the Icy fields of Antarctica, Gigan began using his scanner to check for any lifeforms that were in there. They were all the ones you'd expect to see: Penguins, Orcas, Elephant seals, Leopard Seals, JMO-7, but no Ymir...

{Wait, back up!} Gigan said.

He scanned over a certain area, and deep below the ice was the kaiju known as JMO-7, colloquially known as **Destoroyah**.

Gigan shuddered upon seeing that Destoroyah was sealed away in the ice, and yet, despite cold being, his one known weakness, still had stable vital signs. Gigan immediately began changing his heat ray but stopped when he remembered that Destoroyah was not a kaiju to be trifled with. If there was one monster Gigan was more worried about releasing than **him**, it was Destoroyah. It was better to just leave him the way he was now than to risk dooming the entire world in a vain attempt to kill that which he and Ymir working together couldn't defeat.

More than that though, it was unlike Ymir to hide out somewhere where there was someone so dangerous right beneath her, so he deduced that she probably wasn't there, and fled before he made things worse.

As Gigan continued to scour the world, he came across a ship out in the middle of the ocean with no clear affiliation with Marley or Eldia. Pirates, perhaps? However, this pirate vessel was in danger, as Gigan saw a giant tentacle rising from the water, ready to drag them under. Gigan revved up his chainsaw hands, ready to tear the monster below the water apart, but was stopped by a voice approaching him.

[I wouldn't do that if I were you,] Battrra said.

Gigan gritted his teeth. **{But that Gezora is about to kill those humans! I have to save them!}**

[Remember our deal, Gigan.] Battra flew up to Gigan, his purple eyes locking with Gigan's red visor. **[I gave you permission to kill only the monsters that were encroaching on human territory. The ocean is not, has never been, nor will ever be 'human territory', and as such, that Gezora is well within its rights to feast upon them.]**

Gigan tried to come up with a counterargument, but he was already too late, as the Gezora reached up out of the water and crushed the boat, snapping it in two, before dragging it and its occupants into the water. Gigan held back the urge to weep for the lives lost, while Battra looked down at them, satisfied with what had been done.

{Why... }

[Hm?]

{Why keep them alive if we can't save them from these horrible fates?} Gigan looked up at Battra, his arms shaking and his teeth gritted. **{Why do we have to let innocent people suffer and die when all they want is to be free and explore the world they were born in?}**

[Because humankind must never forget their place in the food chain again.] Battra turned away from Gigan. **[As the guardian of this planet, it is my duty to make sure that no creature on this planet rises to dominance ever again. I made a mistake with the dinosaurs, wiping them all out, but just because I will not make the same mistake with humans does not mean I intend to let them overpopulate and exploit the world once again.]**

With that, Battra flew away, leaving Gigan alone, feeling utterly useless...

"COME ON!" Eren shouted desperately. "I HEARD FROM EVERYONE YOU'RE REALLY GOOD! BERTHOLDT!? REINER!?"

"Sorry kid," Reiner replied. "But if it's advice you want, I'm not really your guy. There's really no special trick to just hanging there."

Eren sighed softly and Armin suggested that it might come to him tomorrow. However, before he could leave, Bertholdt stopped them to ask them something.

"Didn't you say that you were from Shingonshina?"

"Yes, that's right," Armin said as he and Eren sat back down.

"Then you two should know the horrors the titans commit, even with that large creature out there. So why on Earth do you want to go through that again?"

"Well, I didn't see the things Eren saw," Armin said. "I just couldn't stand idly by as the government sent the elderly to their deaths during the failed 'territory retrieval' operation. So, I came here so I could become strong enough to fight the titans so that untrained citizens didn't have to."

Armin then asked a question to Reiner and Bertholdt. "What about you two? Where are you from?"

"Oh, Reiner and I?" Bertholdt answered. "We were both from a mountain village just southeast of Wall Maria."

Armin and Eren gasped in shock as they realized what that meant.

"Yeah, unlike the more prosperous river towns, ours didn't receive word right away. The titans were on us before we even knew what was happening." Bertholdt paused for a moment before continuing. "It happened at dawn. All our livestock were acting wild and out of control. Soon after, we heard these strange rumblings that kept getting closer and closer, and I eventually realized that those

rumblings were the sounds of death getting closer and closer. Eventually, I looked out my window, and..."

Bertholdt paused the story there, and Armin gulped nervously.

"After that, everything is just a blur... We all just panicked and..."

Reiner placed a hand on his friend's shoulder. "Hey, easy there. You're just getting yourself worked up again."

"Sorry..." Bertholdt looked back to Armin and Eren. "What I'm trying to say is that the four of us aren't like the rest of... them."

"Them who?" Armin asked.

"The others here who have never seen the horror of the titans."

The group went on a walk in the night, Bertholdt leading the group with a lantern in hand. As they walked, Bertholdt discussed how most of the others were only there for show or because society demanded it of them, but admitted that he wasn't all that different, as he joined so he could be a part of the military police and hide in the interior, admitting that he didn't have the fortitude for much else. Reiner however sang a different tune, admitting that he wanted to take back the home that was taken from him no matter what. Bertholdt then asked Eren why he signed up. Eren then thought back to that day that wall Maria fell.

"I'm here to kill them, so we can all be free," he said. Bertholdt and Reiner looked back at him as he continued. "I won't stop fighting until we retake the freedom that we were all born with, and the world that's rightfully ours."

Reiner thought for a moment about Eren's words. They struck a chord with him for a variety of reasons and filled him with a mix of respect for Eren's resolve... and fear for Eren's possible ability to act on that resolve.

The four stopped at the foot of a cliff, overlooking a vast forest ahead of them and a glistening lake below them, reflecting the moon off of its surface.

"We'll take it from step one, belt adjustment," Reiner said. "By tomorrow, you'll be an expert." He looked back at Eren and smiled. "You have what it takes. I can see it in you. Am I wrong?"

"No, and with your help, I won't fail," Eren replied. "Thank you Reiner."

It was the moment of truth. The final ODM test. Everyone was there to watch this. Even Gigan was hovering out of eyesight, his vision zoomed in all the way so that he could watch while speaking words of encouragement directly into Eren's mind. Eren stood there with a determined look on his face, awaiting Keith to give the order to the cadets by his sides.

"Eren Jaeger, are you ready?"

"Yes sir!" He replied.

"Proceed!"

The cranks began to creak and tilt as Eren was lifted up into the air slowly but surely. Eren spread out his arms and legs just enough to find his center of balance and managed to stay perfectly straight up in the air. The crowd began to cheer for him, however as Eren looked down with pride, he suddenly began to wobble back and forth, and eventually tip over. Just when everyone thought that Eren had failed, however, he gritted his teeth tightly, grunting and growling with grit and determination as he used all his might to force himself back upright, then roared victoriously as he managed to get back into a balanced stance. Of everyone in the crowd, Keith was the most dumbfounded of all of them. Not only had Eren performed a maneuver that he had never seen nor heard of in his life, but he did so with a broken piece of equipment.

Everyone cheered once more, their cheering even louder and more enthusiastic than before. Even Gigan celebrated his success, especially after detecting the flaw in his equipment in the form of the broken clasp. Eventually, Keith had him lowered and Eren stood proudly in front of his instructor, who removed the belt.

"So, how did I do?" Eren said with pride.

"Better than I thought humanly possible," Keith said, coming as a shock to everyone. It was at that moment that he revealed the broken clasp to Eren. "Your equipment was defective, yet you managed to defy all expectations and stabilize yourself, even after tipping over."

After this, he had Thomas Wagner exchange gears with Eren and had him lifted again. Needless to say, Eren passed with flying colors and earned the respect of all the other cadets when they realized that he went through training with faulty gear.

'I did it, Mikasa!' Eren remarked in his head while looking down at her. 'You and mom don't have to worry about me anymore! I did it!'

Mikasa smiled back as she saw the look on his face, but felt a bit sad as she realized that he wouldn't need her anymore.

'Grisha, this day should bring you pride,' Keith thought. 'Your son is a soldier.'

Reiner Braun: The mind and constitution of a grass-fed ox. Respected and held in high regard by his comrades.

Armin Arlert: Built like a daffodil, but academically brilliant. In fact, it's no stretch to call the boy a genius.

Annie Leonheart: Gifted with a sword, but doesn't co-operate well with her teammates.

Bertholdt Hoover: Heaps of native talent, but too mild-mannered to do anything with that talent.

Jean Kirstein: Ahead of the class on ODM. Also an insufferable smartass with a hair-trigger temper.

Sasha Braus: Unusually fine instincts, rarely shares them with her teammates.

Connie Springer: Good with ODM, but a few sandwiches shy of a picnic.

Mikasa Ackerman: Model cadet, excels in all categories. Truly a model soldier.

Eren Jaeger: Stellar in the field, lackluster in the classroom, but driven by a sense of purpose that's almost terrifying, and clearly hiding something big.

Fly in a Web

"HAAAAAAAAA!"

Reiner Braun charged headlong, a wooden knife clutched tightly in his hands. His target, Eren Jaeger, stood steady as Reiner approached, his hands up and ready to strike as he awaited the perfect opportunity to strike. As Reiner finally made it within arm's reach, Eren extended his hand out, grabbed Reiner by the collar and belt, and then flipped him over his head and onto the ground, disarming him and leaving him stunned and sprawled out on the ground. Reiner grunted and groaned with his eyes shut tight, but managed to recover from the fall. Upon opening his eyes, he saw Eren holding out a hand to help him up.

"Sorry," Eren said. "I've really gotta learn how to hold back."

"Nah, it's alright," Reiner replied as he was hoisted back to his feet. He then held the knife to Eren. "Come on, let's see how you do as the rogue."

Eren hesitated to take the knife but did ultimately take it. However, before he struck, he commented that the training didn't make sense. After all, their enemies were titans, and not humans, so he didn't see the purpose of a knife in a war against creatures so tough that a little knife could never hope to pierce their hides. However, Reiner had some advice to give Eren in response to his doubts.

"The fight doesn't give us a say," Reiner said. "The enemy comes in many different forms, so it's not always going to be as simple as 'fly in with your ODM and slice the naip.' If things get ugly, they get ugly. It's our job as soldiers to be prepared for anything." He then looked over to one of their comrades. "Well, the ones worth their salt anyway."

Reiner drew Eren's attention over to Annie Leonheart, who wasn't participating in the training at all. She was just strolling by without even batting an eyelash at anyone there. Eren recognized this and noted it out loud, prompting Reiner to encourage Eren to teach her a lesson.

As Annie was walking, looking for a place to sit down and watch all these idiots do this stupid task for no reason, she was suddenly stopped by Reiner. She looked up at him, wondering what he wanted, and was less than pleased when she found out what he wanted.

"Commandant not beaten you down enough?" He said in a condescending manner. "Keep it up, and you'll be as flat as the dirt you're walking on. I suggest you rethink why you enlisted in the first place."

Annie was glaring daggers at Reiner as her fists clenched tightly. Eren, who was right behind Reiner, felt intimidated seeing Annie so mad.

'You couldn't pay me to be on her bad side!' He thought to himself. Unfortunately for him, it was no longer his choice.

Eren felt Reiner pat him on the back before pushing him towards Annie, encouraging him to face her. Eren gave a nervous sigh before putting on his game face and preparing to attack.

"I hope you don't expect me to hold back," Eren said before rushing at her, knife in hand. Annie took up a defensive stance before turning out of the way of Eren's charge and kicking him in the shin, causing him to topple over immediately.

"Grr! That was a cheap shot!" Eren growled as he got back up, before Annie kicked him again, flipping him over with his head on the ground and his butt in the air.

Annie then tossed the knife to Reiner and told him to go next. Reiner attempted to back out at first, but after some prodding from Eren, Reiner eventually caved. He attempted to charge at Annie too... and suffered the exact same fate as Eren did.

After the "fight", Eren sat back up while Reiner was still reeling from his defeat.

"That's quite the technique," Eren complimented. "Who taught you how to fight like that?"

"My father," Annie replied.

"Did he pioneer it, or-"

"Does it even matter?" Annie crossed her arms as she scanned over the crowd. "It's pointless, just like all of this. Hand-to-hand combat doesn't count towards our final grade, so the smart ones just blow it off. Only idiots like you take this crap seriously. Well, idiots and... whatever those two are." Eren and Annie then looked at Connie and Sasha as they attempted to emulate Annie's technique, only to be scolded by Keith for wasting time.

"It's all a crapshoot anyway. Only the top ten cadets get to serve in the interior." She then lifted Eren up by the back of his collar and pressed her forehead against his while holding up the wooden knife to him, which Eren attempted to block. "First rule of this life: the better you are at dropping the 'bad guys', the more distance the powers that be put between you and them. That's what this whole stupid farce is about."

"Sure, whatever you say!" Eren tried to pull a fast one on Annie, only to be tripped up and fall on his back with Annie on top of him, once again aiming the knife at him.

"Face it, Eren. You don't fight the nature of things and win." After a short moment, Annie got back up, leaving Eren sprawled out on the

dirt. "All these sons of bitches want you to do is play their little game. Don't be their pawn." And with that, she walked away.

Eren stood back up and watched her while contemplating her words, coming to a conclusion that she more than likely didn't intend, but to him made the most sense in this situation.

'I've been so fixated on building myself up that I couldn't see it,' he thought. 'She's right. They're not honing their skills to fight. They're honing their skills to **run**.'

-C-

After months of training, the graduation night had begun, and the top ten cadets of the 104th Cadet Corps were announced. In order, Mikasa Ackerman ranked at the top of her class, followed by Reiner Braun, Bertholdt Hoover, Eren Jaeger, Annie Leonheart, Jean Kirstein, Marco Bodt, Connie Springer, Sasha Braus, and finally Christa Lenz. They all saluted the other cadets as the ceremony came to a close. After proceedings, Keith rode on horseback to the Jaeger Household to deliver the good news to Carla. Upon arriving, Keith knocked on the door and awaited someone to answer it with a proud smile on his face.

However, when the door opened, Keith's smile faded into a look of confusion as the person who answered was neither Carla nor the caretaker he sent, but a man possibly in his late 20s to early 30s with an eyepatch and an intense look in his one working eye. As the two's gazes locked with each other, all words escaped Keith until he finally snapped out of his shocked trance and scowled at the person standing before him.

"Who the hell are you?" Keith asked with an angered snarl.

"I am Carla Jaeger's caretaker," Serizawa said. "You must be Keith Shadis."

"And you **aren't** the guy I appointed to her."

"No, I'm not," Serizawa replied as he invited Keith inside. "Please, come in. We can talk about this without any trouble."

Keith pushed past Serizawa and marched inside. He made his way to Carla's room to make sure she was okay. He opened the door to find her reading a book by her bed with a candle illuminating the room around her. Beside her seemed to be various tools and medical appliances, which made Keith even more suspicious of Serizawa and his intentions for her. However, before he could ask the "caretaker" any questions, he had to make sure Carla was okay.

"Carla! Are you alright?!" Keith asked while kneeling by Carla's bed with a panicked expression.

Carla placed a bookmark on the page she was reading before setting her book aside. "I'm fine, Keith," she said. " But what are you doing here?"

Just then, Daisuke walked into the room and watched the scene unfold.

Keith proceeded with what he was saying, "I came with news about Eren and the others... but I wanted to make sure you were okay first."

"Eren? What about him? Did something happen?"

Keith calmed down before replying. "I wanted to let you know that he, Mikasa, and Armin have just graduated from their training. I thought it was best to deliver this message myself."

Carla smiled brightly at this news. "Oh, thank you Keith. I'm so glad none of them gave up. So, where are they now?"

"They're currently making their way to this district to celebrate the end of their training. I was wondering if I could escort you over there so that you could see them before they're deployed."

"Oh, I'd love to. As long as it's not too much trouble."

"Not at all, Carla. I just want you to see how much they've grown for yourself."

"Okay then. We should get going right away then."

Serizawa then spoke up, saying, "I'll remain here to get everything ready for tomorrow. I'll see you both then."

Upon being reminded of Daisuke's presence, Keith looked back at the man while still addressing Carla. "Actually... we have some time before they arrive. I'd like to speak with my associate for a moment," he said in a menacing tone that Carla didn't pick up on, but Serizawa was able to when seeing the look on Keith's face.

Carla nodded and resumed reading her book while Keith and Serizawa quietly exited her room. Keith shut the door behind them and then the two went somewhere where Carla wouldn't be able to hear them. After shutting the door to this room, Keith proceeded to grab Serizawa by his shirt and slam him against a wall while holding him up with his bare hands.

"WHO THE HELL ARE YOU, YOU BASTARD!?" Keith bellowed in Daisuke's face. "WHERE'S THE GUY THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE HERE!?"

"He's home safe! No harm done!"

Keith pressed Serizawa against the wall harder while continuing his interrogation. "You better give me a damn good explanation of why you're here and what you want with her, or so help me, I WILL SEND YOU TO HELL SO FAST YOU WON'T EVEN KNOW HOW YOU GOT THERE! YOU HEAR ME!?"

Serizawa placed his hands on Keith's arms. "Relax, it's not her I'm after. It's Grisha I want."

Keith lowered Serizawa a bit and raised an eyebrow. "Grisha? What do you want with her husband?"

"He and I have some... personal business that I want to settle, and Carla is the only way I could find that would lead me to his whereabouts. If possible, she could maybe also tell me what he's been doing in these walls."

Keith began analyzing Daisuke's words, ultimately coming to the conclusion that Serizawa must be from outside the walls, just like Grisha was, but had no idea what sort of business Grisha could have gotten involved with that would risk his wife's safety. Keith finally put Serizawa down and began to explain.

"Grisha disappeared while Carla was in the hospital. She has no idea where he went and I doubt she could tell you anything about his business inside these walls that may interest you."

Daisuke nodded. "I believe you, because I know you're trying to protect her. Believe me, she is in no danger at all."

"So that's it? You'll leave now?"

"Not exactly," Daisuke scratched his head. "I don't exactly have anywhere else to go. Plus, I still have things I need to do, and looking after Carla is one of them. Even if I have nothing to gain from her in regards to information about Grisha, I can still use her as cover to avoid suspicion." Keith's fist shook with anger, upset that this man would use Carla as collateral, until Daisuke added, "Also, I will be able to fulfill the deal I made with her."

"Deal? What deal?"

"The deal to help her walk again," Serizawa said. "While her kids were out training for the past few years, I've been gathering materials needed to make a suitable pair of prosthetic legs for her, or 'fake legs' if you will, which is durable enough to help her stand and flexible enough to allow her to move."

"A fake leg? I've never heard of such a thing. Usually amputees are restricted from doing most things in life, with no 'fake' limb to recover what they lost. Some soldiers I know wear eyepatches, like you do. Do you expect me to believe that you can somehow create a new eye for them to see out of?"

"Not an eye. A leg or an arm, however, is very possible as long as I have the necessary materials to do so."

Keith pondered this possibility for a moment, but he still remained suspicious of Serizawa and his personal affairs with Grisha. However, despite his doubts, he had to admit that it was clear he didn't pose a threat to Carla.

"If you can actually make her walk again, I'll consider keeping this conversation off the record." Keith said.

Serizawa nodded, "I promise you, nothing bad will happen to her."

"You bet your ass nothing bad will happen to her! Not unless you want to lose your other eye!"

Serizawa reached out his hand. Keith sighed and took it, the two shaking hands and nodding in agreement, before returning to Carla's room. Serizawa got Carla situated in her wheelchair and then she and Keith left to go see Eren and the others.

After they were gone, Serizawa noticed a cloud over head floating down to him. His ally and old friend, Huang Meng, floated down to him with supplies clutched in his arms. He handed them over to Daisuke, who graciously accepted them.

"Thank you, Meng," Serizawa said. "You've been a tremendous help so far."

"Anything for you, doctor," Huang replied.

"Please, none of that. I'm not a doctor anymore."

"You sure do act like one. You heal the sick, mend people's wounds, you basically live by the 'do no harm' rule-"

Serizawa let out a bitter laugh at that last comment. "Tell that to the hundreds of millions of people Destoroyah killed..."

Huang went silent as Serizawa approached the house. However, before Serizawa could close the door behind him, Huang placed a hand on his shoulder.

"It wasn't your fault," Huang said. "Just because you discovered fire doesn't mean you're responsible for arson attacks."

"I appreciate the metaphor, but I spent decades of my life trying to find some way that my invention of Micro Oxygen could have benefited humanity, to no avail. There was only one thing it had ever been useful for... destruction."

Serizawa closed the door, leaving Huang outside clutching his arm awkwardly and looking down at his feet.

-E-

The graduates were in the mess hall, celebrating their years of hard work finally paying off. While Armin was talking to someone about logistics, and Mikasa was feeding Sasha half a loaf of bread to get her to stop bugging her with attempted small talk, Eren watched as the other cadets discussed the military branches that they would all be joining, and Jean's bragging in particular about how he was going to join the Military Police caught the attention and annoyance of Eren, who stood up and decided to challenge him.

"You know Jean, with all the work you put in, I'm surprised you're letting it all go to waste hiding from the titans for the rest of your life," Eren remarked.

"Eren, please don't start a fight..." Mikasa whispered.

"I won't."

Jean leered at Eren's comment. "Hiding from the titans? You say that like me having basic survival instincts makes me a coward. Really, I'm just being realistic."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Eren retorted.

"Half of humanity went to reclaim the land stolen by the Titans, and none of them could do a damn thing to those freaks. We don't have a chance against the titans, so what's the point of trying? Not to mention, there's also that giant dragon that we still barely know anything about, other than that it's bigger, and probably stronger than every titan to ever exist."

Eren gritted his teeth at that last comment. "So what? Just because something's bigger and stronger than you, you think it's automatically a threat?" Everyone begins listening in on the conversation as Eren continues. "I'm gonna join the scouts so that I can help explore beyond the walls and see more creatures like him. Gigan is proof that there are things in the outside world that we don't even know about, and I want to know about all of it, and uncover all the secrets this world has to offer!"

The name "Gigan" caught everyone's attention as they wondered why Eren decided to call the metal dragon that. Reiner, Annie and Bertholdt all glanced at each other in shock at the same time, wondering how on Earth Eren could possibly know that name.

Jean started laughing. "Gigan?! What the hell kind of name is that?" Jean sighed and chuckled a bit. "Well, it's a fittingly ridiculous name for such a ridiculous looking creature!"

"Regardless, that 'ridiculous looking creature' is here for a reason, and that's to help save humanity from the titan scourge. It's baffling that you can't get the fact that he saved people through your thick skull, just because you're a coward who's afraid of anything he doesn't understand."

Jean growled and stood up. "You shut the hell up, Jaeger!"

Marco tried to calm Jean down, but it was useless, as Jean and Eren began to square off. However before anything could happen between them, Eren noticed Mikasa's worried expression and cursed silently to himself as he remembered what he told her. This time though, Eren was less worried about getting scolded, and more about breaking the promise he made to his mother. He was supposed to be getting stronger, but instead, he was acting the same as he always did. But not this time and Eren proceeded to step down and return to Mikasa's side.

However, Jean saw the look Eren and Mikasa shared as he returned to the table, and his jealousy pushed him to attack Eren regardless. Jean pinned Eren against a wall, prepared to punch Eren in the face.

"YOU THINK YOU CAN JUDGE ME!?" Jean screamed.

"YOU RIP MY SHIRT, AND YOU'RE DEAD!" Eren hollered.

"I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT YOUR SHIRT! YOU PISS ME OFF!" Jean roared.

And then, time seemed to stop as Eren finally realized something. Jean has something he's trying to prove. He could tell by his choice of words, the look on his face, and the slight tear welling up in his eye. It all reminded him of when he was little and was trying to tell Mikasa that the Scouts were the right option for him. Of course, he never attempted to hit her, but the concept was the same nonetheless. This is why, in his head, Eren apologized in advance for what he was about to do.

He grabbed Jean by the arm and then swept his leg, knocking Jean over and leaving him sprawling on the ground. Eren scoffed at Jean and wordlessly left the Messhall, with Armin and Mikasa quickly following him, leaving Jean on the ground feeling like a complete fool.

As the trio left the mess hall and went for a walk outside so Eren could clear his head, they spotted Hannes approaching, walking alongside two other soldiers. As the two groups intersected, Hannes noticed Eren looked a bit roughed up and assumed he got into a fight, which wasn't surprising to him. Hannes dismissed the other two soldiers and went to greet the trio, who were happy to see a friendly face after what happened.

"Looks like you got in quite the scuffle, kid," Hannes said. "Can't say I'm surprised. Looks like that fire in you just can't be extinguished."

"It's great to see you again,," Eren said. "Though, I wouldn't have expected a drunk like you to become captain of the Stationary Troops."

"Watch it, kid," Hannes flicked Eren's forehead. "You're speakin' to your superior now."

The group laughed together, all except Mikasa, who just smiled.

"So, now that you three are graduated, have you picked out which division to join yet?"

Mikasa quickly answered for the group, "We'll be joining the Survey Corps."

"The Survey Corps? Right, right, I forgot you guys kept talking about wanting to go outside the walls. Unfortunately, after Shingonshina, the Survey Corps hasn't been able to advance outside the walls in years, and that dragon leaves them nervous about venturing too far regardless of if there are titans in the way or not."

"Maybe there's a way to get him to help us?" Armin suggested. "Gigan seems to understand that the titans are our enemies, so maybe we could speak to him on some basic level."

"Hugh, not a bad idea. Also, where'd you get 'Gigan' from?"

"Oh, that's what Eren called him earlier. I know there's no official name, so Gigan will have to do for now," Armin replied.

Mikasa shrugged. "It works for me."

"Suit yourselves," Hannes said. "Maybe I'll spread the word of that name for you guys. Speaking of which, I'd better get going. Congratulations to all of you."

"See you later, ." Eren said as he and the other waved goodbye to him.

As Hannes continued down his path, he reminisced about the time he saved Eren and his family on that fateful day. It made him happy to know that he was capable of doing something useful as a Garrison soldier even back then. Since that day, he was working harder and easing up on the drinking, and eventually became the captain of an entire unit. As he reminisced, he stopped in his tracks when he saw Keith pushing Carla towards him.

"Hannes! It's so nice to see you," Carla said with a bright smile on her face.

"Same to you, Carla," he replied.

Keith and Cala stopped and he and Hannes saluted each other before Keith crossed his arms behind his back. "I've heard news about your promotion to Garrison Captain. I must congratulate you, Hannes," he said.

"And I must congratulate you on training those kids for the past three years. I have no idea how you can handle them!"

"Compared to what I saw as Survey Corps Commander, those kids are less than nothing. Although, there have been some... exceptional students."

"Keith told me about the rankings in the class, and I was so excited to hear that Eren and Mikasa were in the top ten," Carla added.

Hannes whistled. "Top ten? I had a feeling Mikasa would rank that high, but I'd never expect that from Eren."

"I know. I'm so proud of him."

"Well, I'm sure you guys are here to see them and not waste your time staring at my mug, so I'll leave you all alone."

Hannes waved goodbye to them and went on his way, while Keith and Carla continued down the road, where they saw the trio sitting on a bench outside. The three friends immediately jumped up out of their seats when they saw Carla, and wrapped her into a group hug, nearly squeezing the air out of her lungs.

"What're you doing here, mom? Is it okay for you to be out right now?" Eren asked as the three let her go.

"It's fine, sweetie. It's not like I'm sick or anything. Is it really that bad that I want to see all of you before you go off for god knows how long?"

"O-of course not,," Armin stuttered. "We just d-didn't anticipate your arrival here on graduation night."

"We were expecting to see you tomorrow morning before we went to apply for the Survey Corps," Mikasa said.

"Oh... that's right..." Carla folded her hands together as a troubled look washed over her face. "I almost forgot you were going to join them..."

They all noticed her expression, so Eren took a knee before her and placed his hands on her shoulders. "Mom, don't you remember the promise I made to you? That you'll always be a part of my life, no matter what?"

"I remember, but... " Carla rubbed her eyes a bit. "I never realized how fast the day would come. Now you're all grown up, and you'll be leaving the walls soon."

Eren wiped away some of her tears. "I know this is hard, but nothing will stop us from returning to you."

"We'll all look after each other, just as promised," Mikasa said.

"And we'll make sure to take our home back," Armin added.

Carla's eyes began filling with tears as Eren held both her hands. "I just... I can't think of what to say... you've finally made it to this point. I s-should have been more prepared for this..."

Carla began to sob, which prompted them all to embrace her again, this time much more gently than before. Carla wrapped her arms around all three of them as tears were shared among the entire family.

"Keith..." Carla gasped through her tears. "Keith told me that... you all would be in good hands... and I trust him. Just like how I trust that you three will make it home in one piece... So I'll wait as long as I can."

Mikasa smiled at her while Eren thought about that last part of what Carla said. He knew that she didn't want to wait as long as she's been waiting for his father. This thought motivated Eren to do whatever he could to quickly bring his home back and return to his mother. Meanwhile, Armin placed a hand on her back and attempted to cheer her up.

"Plus, you'll never be alone," Armin said. "You'll have them with you."

Keith flinched a bit at the mention of him, but calmed down. He had to trust that Serizawa had her best interests at heart.

"Um... Carla?" Keith said. "I believe it's time for us to go. We shouldn't keep them out too late."

"R-r-right," Carla sniffled and rubbed her eyes. "I guess this is goodbye for now."

"But not forever," Eren reassured.

Carla nodded in solidarity as Keith wheeled her away, as Eren, Mikasa, and Armin watched them leave with a tinge of sadness in their hearts. Carla took one last look back at them for one last time and waved goodbye to them. The trio waved back before returning to the mess hall, which was up in arms when they returned, with many cadets approaching Eren, asking how he managed to pull off that leg sweep of his.

-G-

The next day soon arrived, and the Survey Corps began their next expedition to reclaim humanity's lost territory. Despite previous failed attempts to avoid the titans surrounding strange beacons that were making lowpitched rumbling noises from sunrise to sunset, reportedly created by Gigan, whose name reached commander Erwin Smith, the corps continued onwards with confidence. The whole crowd was cheering for them as they watched them ride on horses through the streets. Among these cheering onlookers was one who stationed himself too far away and too high in the sky to be seen by anyone on the ground.

Gigan was looking down upon the city of Trost with a smile on his face as his vision zoomed in on the Scouts. If there was one group of humans he could always cheer for, it was them. In his mind, they would be able to do what Battra wouldn't allow him to, and all he needed to do was bend the rules of the deal from time to time. Nothing too noticeable. Lure away a titan hoard here, lead one towards a more capable and alert scout there, all the while remaining technically within the guidelines of his deal with Battra. Unfortunately, that was all he was able to do without stoking the dark moth's ire,

and in Gigan's mind, it would be better for humanity if he was there but in shackles, than there back in the sarcophagus he awoke in.

As he scanned the crowd, he noticed Eren and his comrades down in the crowd and smiled. Suddenly however, his sensors went off, and he realized that something was going on over in Marley, so he decided to notify Eren that he'd be leaving for a bit. Eren flinched for a bit before excusing himself to a nearby bathroom, where he locked himself in and then began talking to Gigan.

"What do you want Gigan?!" Eren said. "Can't it wait until later?"

{No, it really can't!} Gigan said frantically. {Remember how I told you there was one other place where there was a large human civilization?}

"Yeah, I remember. You told me that it was across the ocean from us, and I said I wanted to go there so I could learn more about them-"

{Yeahyeahyeah, look, something's going down over there, and I need to go help them. I'll be back soon, so make sure nothing happens while I'm gone!}

Before Eren could ask what was going on, Gigan already left the island, far out of the range where he and Eren could hear each other. Somehow, Eren could feel this within him, and so he chose not to waste his time calling him and just left the bathroom, where he was suddenly shoved aside as Connie ran in there.

Some time later, Eren was stationed with a group on top the wall, the group consisting of himself, Connie, Sasha, Mina, Thomas and Samuel. Up on the roof, Connie and Thomas both revealed that they were joining the Scouts, and much to Eren's surprise, Mina revealed that it was probably because of the speech he gave last night. However, their conversation was interrupted when Sasha showed up with some meat that she stole from the officers' pantry.

"SASHA, THEY COULD THROW YOUR ASS IN THE CLING FOR THAT!" Thomas shouted.

"Seriously, what's wrong with you?" Samuel asked.

"What isn't wrong with her?" Connie retorted.

"It'll be fine, I'm willing to share~!" Sasha said while drooling and blushing at the thought of putting that meat into her mouth.

"Do you have any idea how rare meat's been since the titans took wall Maria?" Mina asked.

"Um... a little bit, yeah," Sasha replied. "Just look at it this way: soon enough, we'll have all the room we need for livestock."

Samuel took a deep breath and then asked for some, Connie soon to follow, and Mina not far behind him. As this was going on, Eren looked over Trost as thought began to flood his mind.

'Has it really been this long?' Eren thought. 'And now look at us. Ready to stand tall again. We can do this! Mankind didn't start this war, but we're gonna finish it.'

Just then, lightning struck right in front of the gates of Trost, as the Colossal Titan suddenly appeared out of thin air. Everyone looked up at it, shocked and terrified by its sudden appearance, as the Colossal Titan suddenly unleashed a massive burst of steam that knocked everyone off the wall. Most of them managed to regain their footing, however Samuel slipped and fell, prompting Sasha to catch him with her ODM anchor. Eren took some time to process the fact that his greatest fears were becoming reality, and Trost was under attack, made even worse when he saw that the wall had been kicked in. Eren then steeled his nerves and blasting back up the wall to face the Colossal Titan on his own. Eren landed face to face with the Colossal Titan.

"Hi there... it's been a while..."

The Colossal titan swung his arm, which Eren dodged out of the way of, but it wasn't Eren he was aiming at, which he realized when he heard the cannons on the wall being smacked off by the Colossal Titan's massive arm.

'Son of a bitch! He took out the cannons!' Eren thought. 'The gate was no accident then. He... he planned it. HE'S INTELLIGENT!'

The Colossal titan then reached for Eren, but he dodged through the titan's fingers and attempted to run across the titan's arm to take him out. However, he was shaken off when he suddenly felt a rumble beneath him. He perched on the side of the wall as he looked up at the Colossal titan, his eyes widening as he realized that the Colossal titan seemed nervous.

The dirt beneath the titan began to rise into the air as massive clouds of dust. As Eren was watching this, he yelped when he suddenly felt someone hoist him off his perch and back onto the top of the wall a distance away. Between the dust and steam, he couldn't make out the identity of his savior, but could only assume based on the trail of mist left behind that it was one of his comrades.

He was grateful to whoever saved him too, as he saw rocks beginning to pelt the wall. He then jumped back when he saw eight spyres rise from the ground. The spyres were brown with yellow stripes on each of them, and sharp tips. What was most disturbing was that the spyres appeared to be covered in some sort of hair. Then, Eren's jaw nearly dropped as he saw that they were not spyres at all... but **legs**.

The Colossal titan let out a low pitched howl as the legs wrapped around him and tackled him to the ground. Standing over the Colossal Titan was what appeared to be a gigantic spider with a body as long as the wall was tall, and with legs longer than the Colossal Titan itself. Eren couldn't believe his eyes as he watched the Colossal titan rise to it's feet and seemingly attempt to flee, only to a stream of webs to erupt from the giant spider's mouth, pinning it to the ground. The spider then crawled on top of the titan, creeping

towards the naip, when suddenly a huge burst of steam erupted from the Colossal titan, launching the spider off of it and onto it's back. Eren was forced to anchor himself in place so that he wouldn't be launched to his death, and covered his face as steam blew past him. When the smoke cleared, he realized that the Colossal Titan was gone without a trace.

"W-what the hell is going on?"

That was all Eren could ask as he saw the giant spider climb over the wall and into Trost.

As Eren stared on in a mix of confusion and horror, he heard his comrades arrive by his side.

"Eren, whered the Colossal titan go?!" Thomas asked. "Was it taken out?"

"No, he's gone!" Eren replied. "It's just like back during Shingonshina! He's here one moment and gone the next! Just like that... I'm sorry."

"It's okay. You did what you could. I mean, just look at us, we're too scared to move."

"Hey! Wollow on your own time!" Connie shouted. "In case you haven't noticed, we have a breach, AND we have a new monster in town, and I'm pretty sure the spider isn't on our side! Our only saving grace is the pit infront of the gate that the spider left behind, but it might not buy us enough time before the titans arrive, so we have to act now!"

Suddenly, an officer landed by them and ordered them all back to HQ. Anyone who got close to the Colossal Titan or the new monster were ordered to provide information to the higherups.

-K-

Bells chimed and the people of Trost screamed as they fled the city, with the giant spider close behind them, its long legs occasionally reaching out so that it could use the adhesive hairs on its limbs to grab up some of the people and bring them to its maw, where they were devoured. It didn't stop at humans though, as the spider also ate any pets the crowd had with them, or horses that were to be used by the MPs and Garrison. Carla and Serizawa were among the people in the crowd, narrowly escaping the bug's grasp before eventually reaching the gate, where people were being filed through as quickly as possible.

The spider's eight eyes blinked slowly as they remained locked on the crowds of people, which to it, were nothing more than an all you can eat buffet. Eventually, the Spider stopped when a squad of MPs intercepted it, each of them equipped with ODM gear with rifles on their backs. The Spider took note of the soldiers, but found it laughable when they attempted to fight it with nothing more than swords and guns. It swatted a few of them out of the sky like flies, and then ate them up like flies. However, the soldiers posed enough of a distraction for the garrison to unleash the cannons upon the giant spider.

The giant spider flinched a bit at the cannons and covered its eyes before retaliating by spitting out a stream of webs that trapped the soldiers and left the tanks inoperable. Kumonga then began smashing buildings around it to free up space. As it was doing this, a more focused stream of web was being released from its abdomen. The soldiers attempting to fight the spider realized quickly what was happening. It was trying to weave a web, using the city itself to support it. One of the soldiers tried to cut the web with his blade, but ended up getting the blade stuck in the web, and then breaking his ODM gear when he tried to pull it out. This in turn left him defenceless when the spider finally noticed him and caught him in its clutches.

His captain could only watch as he was dragged into the spider's maw, never to be seen again.

-E-

"OUT OF THE FRYING PAN AND INTO THE FIRE CADETS!" A commander shouted. "IT'S TIME TO PUT YOUR TRAINING TO WORK! I HAVE FAITH EACH OF YOU WILL BE A CREDIT TO YOUR REGIMENT!"

Mikasa frantically ran through the barracks as everyone was getting geared up, briefly stopping when she saw Franz and Hannah embracing each other before they had to go into battle. She had to find Eren before everything went to hell, eventually finding him with Armin, giving him a pep talk as Armin started panicking over everything that was happening at once. Mikasa kept her distance after seeing this and took a step back.

Suddenly, Sasha jumped at her, screaming and clutching her arms as she attempted to explain what happened out there. This prompted Mikasa to slap Sasha across the face, and while Sasha knelt on the floor, clutching her cheek, Mikasa knelt beside her.

"Get a hold of yourself, Braus," She said sternly. "Fear and panic are unbecoming of a soldier. Right now, we need to fight, so we're going to fight. It doesn't matter if it's titans, spiders, a dragon, or the devil himself, you're a soldier. Your job is to fight the monsters that lurk beyond the wall, not cower in fear like a sniveling little baby."

Sasha slowly calmed down. "You know... you're a lot less nice when it's not lunch... but, thanks for that. I needed it. You're a good friend, Mikasa." She then gave Mikasa a hug, before going to fill up her fuel tanks.

Mikasa sat there for a moment, wondering what Sasha was talking about until she remembered all the times she gave Sasha some of her food while Sasha was yammering on next to her, and realized that she must have thought that those moments made Mikasa her friend. Mikasa sighed in annoyance before standing up and dusting herself off.

Later on, the cadets were debriefed by Kitz Woberman, splitting everyone into four squadrons. Each squadron was responsible for supply relay, message relay, and enemy combat under the command of the garrison.

"THE INNER SOUTH SQUADRON WILL BE TAKING THE VANGUARD," Kitz shouted. "CADETS WILL BE TAKING THE MIDDLE GUARD LED BY THE SUPPORT SQUAD! THE REAR GUARD WILL BE RESERVED FOR THE ELITES! I EXPECT YOU ALL TO MAN YOUR POSTS KNOWING THE ADVANCE TEAM HAS BEEN WIPED OUT!"

Everyone gasped in shock at this news.

"THAT'S RIGHT! THE OUTER GATE IS HISTORY! THE TITANS ARE IN! THE PIT IN FRONT OF THE GATE HAS KEPT THE NUMBERS LOW, HOWEVER, THEY ARE RISING STEADILY! THIS MEANS THAT THE ARMORED TITAN IS LIKELY TO REAPPEAR! IF AND WHEN HE DOES, WALL ROSE WILL ALSO BE HISTORY!"

Everyone in the crowd was horrified and were all muttering among themselves until Kitz shut everyone up and gave them the order to defend the evacuation until it was done. Eren intended to do just that as soon as he realized that his mom and would also be in the evacuation.

After the debriefing, everyone got into their stations. As everyone was rushing around the place, Jean was cursing the fact that this had to happen now. Just one more day and he could have been in the interior away from all this. As he continued to march by, ignoring all the people terrified for their lives, he suddenly bumped into Eren. Upon seeing him, he scoffed and tried to push him aside.

"What the hell, man?" Eren placed his arm in front of Jean to stop him. "What's wrong with you?"

"What the hell do you think?!" Jean snapped back. "We're all about to be titan chow! You expect me to sing you a happy little song?"

You're loving this, aren't you, you little psycho?"

"Hey, get a hold of yours-"

"NO! Not all of us aspire to be eaten!"

"DAMN IT, SHUT UP!" Eren shouted as he pinned Jean to a wall so he could speak to him. "WE WERE TRAINED FOR THIS! WHAT DO YOU THINK THE LAST THREE YEARS WERE ABOUT!?"

Jean's eyes widened as Eren continued.

"We survived. We stared death in the face, and we lived! Not everyone can say that. Some people couldn't take it and either ran or were thrown out! Hell, some people actually died, BUT NOT US! AM I RIGHT!? WE POWERED THROUGH FOR THREE YEARS, WHAT'S ONE MORE DAY!?" Eren slowly loosened his grip on Jean's coat. "You can do this Jean. The MPs will still be there for you tomorrow."

Jean took a moment to mull over what Eren said. Ultimately, it worked. What Eren said made sense to him. So, he marched towards his group, now slightly more ready to face the titans and the giant spider. As Eren nodded to himself, satisfied with that interaction, Mikasa, who had been watching the whole conversation, finally spoke up.

"Eren?" She asked, "Do you think mother is okay?"

"She has to be. Serizawa should be there to help her," he answered.

"But what if something happened and he couldn't help her? Do you think we should look for her?"

"You have rear guard, right? You should go check and see if mom made it to the gate."

"But what about you? Things might go wrong on your end and I won't be able to make it to you in time."

"Look, I know mom asked us to look out for each other, but making sure mom is okay is more important right now. We can defend ourselves," Eren said in reference to the ODM gear. "She can't. If she doesn't make it out of here, there's no point to that promise. We have the power to protect her now, so we need to use it."

Mikasa sighed softly. "Just promise that you won't die, okay?"

Eren smiled and held out his fist. "I won't." Mikasa bumped it and Eren smiled at her. "I'll be back for you two. I promise."

Mikasa blushed slightly as Eren walked away. Mikasa watched him leave for his group and then left back for her's as they both left HQ and proceeded with their missions.

Eren, Thomas, Armin, Mina, Mylius, and Nac waited on a rooftop for their orders while looking down towards a breach in the wall and wondering how the front guard was handling things. All except Eren, who was thinking about Gigan, as well as that other human settlement that he told him about. Ever since he told him all these stories, he wished that he could tell Armin all the things Gigan told him about the outside world, but had to bite his tongue until the right time, when he knew he knew he could reveal everything to him. However, more pressing was the fact that Gigan still wasn't back yet, which made Eren worry that something happened during Gigan's mission.

"Eren? Are you alright?" Armin asked, snapping Eren out of his trance.

"Hugh? Oh, yeah, I'm fine." Eren said while rubbing the back of his head.

"Don't tell me you're getting nervous," Mina teased.

"N-no! I was just... wondering what Mikasa was doing?"

"Ooh! THinking about your girlfriend, hugh?"

"I didn't take you for that kind of guy, Eren," Thomas added. "It's weird to think that you could be so emotional."

"H-HEY! It's not like that!" Eren shouted, his face bright red. "I was just wondering if she found my mom near the rear guard is all!"

Mina and Thomas began laughing softly at Eren's behavior, while Armin was just perplexed, and also able to tell he wasn't telling the truth when he noticed Eren's red earlobe.

"W-well, you don't need to worry about her," Armin said. "I'm sure she's fine with around, and Mikasa can quickly check for them by the gate. If they're not there, then the garrison troops might have found them somewhere in the city."

Eren sighed and nodded. Although he was still thinking about Gigan, he decided to instead focus his attention on Carla after what Armin said. Suddenly, a red flair was seen near the breach of the wall and caught the attention of Eren's group. They realized that the signal meant a Titan was spotted entering Wall Rose and broke through the front guard defenses. The group then nodded to each other and were about to take off, when they all suddenly saw an abnormal running towards them.

"SHIT! GET OUT OF THE WAY!" Eren yelled as everyone leaped out of the way of the titan's attack.

However, not everyone reacted fast enough to dodge the attack. As the titan slammed face-first into the building that they were standing on, they heard someone scream at the top of their lungs. The group looked down at the titan and watched as its head rose, revealing Thomas dangling out of it, halfway in already. While everyone else was horrified by this, Eren seized the opportunity and landed on the back of the titan's neck, before driving his blades into the nape and slicing it out completely. Mina grabbed Thomas and pulled him out just as the abnormal began to fall to the ground.

Once Eren regrouped with everyone, he saw that Thomas was in critical condition, wailing in agony as he tried to cover his wounds with his hands. His teammates tried to bandage him up as he continued to holler in pain. Unfortunately for them, all the hollering combined with the beacon of Titan steam caught the attention of the giant spider, who took a break from spinning its web to come after the group.

Armin was the first to alert everyone that the spider was approaching, but the only way they could go while taking Thomas with them was swarming with Titans. Trapped between a rock and a hard place, the group went with the only option where they had a chance of escape, and that was through the titan area. All the titans there were abnormals, meaning that they couldn't outrun any of them. They just had to sneak through the titan-infested area.

To make things easier on them, Thomas gagged himself with a torn-off piece of his shirt so that he wouldn't give away their position. However, that only made things slightly more easy for them, as they had to constantly stay on their toes. Because they had to constantly carry them, they couldn't fly through the air with their ODM gear, and with Kumonga prowling about, they had to have roves over their heads at all times. Eventually, the group was able to hide out inside one of the abandoned houses, which they thought would give them some safety... until they saw the giant spider stab its legs into various houses to find them.

With the giant spider getting closer and closer, Armin began wracking his brain as to what they could do in this situation. They were cornered, helpless, and powerless to stop their pursuers. Everything seemed hopeless... until he heard something going on outside.

Armin looked out the window to see two abnormals attacking and trying to eat the giant spider. The spider managed to kick them away, even smashing the roof of the building they were in with one of them, but this sight gave Armin an idea. He turned back to the rest of his group, who were all huddled up in the living room.

"Everyone, I have a plan," Armin said.

-K-

Kumonga hissed and chirped as two 5-meter-titans and one 10-meter-titan gathered around it, all gnawing at its legs. Enraged by this attack, Kumonga stabbed one of them right through the neck, impaling its naip, before tossing the body at the 10-meter, launching it into a building, and impaling it on debris. Kumonga then shook the 5-meter-titan off and then lifted up its massive bulk over it, before dropping down, flattening the titan completely.

The gargantuan beast then crawled up to an approaching 7-meter-titan and bit into it, its fangs injecting it with a paralyzing agent that went into effect quickly and left it completely immobile as the spider bit the titan's naip out. Just before Kumonga could get back to smashing houses in search of his prey, the humans he was hunting burst out of the house, most of them launching themselves into the air with their ODM gear,

Kumonga gave chase to the ones that were flying around, attempting to use its web spray to stop them in mid-air, but kept missing. Kumonga then noticed one of the titans approaching the blonde-haired boy, attempting to devour him, and Kumonga quickly jumped for it, killing it on the spot.

'Not exactly what I planned,' Armin thought.

As Armin continued to fly around, Kumonga noticed more of the titans approaching, drawn to him along with the other humans. Kumonga, angered by the sudden wave of competition, began fighting against all of the titans., unaware of the two humans currently escaping on the ground, one carrying the other.

-E-

Eren pumped his fist victoriously, then slapped Armin on the back and praised him for coming up with the plan that saved all of them.

Armin smiled and thanked Eren for the praise, though he did note that he had run out of fuel in the midst of that operation. However, in the midst of their celebration, they failed to notice an abnormal that they didn't account for approaching from behind them until it was too late. By the time Armin noticed, it would have been too late for him... had it not been for Eren.

Eren shoved Armin out of the way just as the titan's hand grabbed for its prey.

"EREN!"

"ARMIN, GET OUT OF HERE! NOW! SAVE YOURSE-" These were the last words Eren was able to say to Armin before the titan swallowed him whole.

Armin screamed at the top of his lungs as Mina grabbed Armin and zipped away with him just in time. The group caught up with each other and fled from the battle taking place, with the titan that ate Eren being blasted with a ball of web that forced the titan to the ground and immobilized it completely. Armin was completely speechless, the same going for the rest of the squad, as they all fled to higher ground.

-Author's note-

Holy shit, this chapter was long. I originally planned on ending this when Kumonga entered the walls, but then I thought the chapter would be too short, so then I just kept writing until I got to the point where we did end.

Anyway, now that I'm actually getting reviews, I'd like to use the end of these chapters to highlight my favorites, and my responses to them, or, in this case, all of them, sense I don't have that many just yet.

Guest account: "Damn, I really dislike the bitchy Eren."

You know, I look back at season 1 with such strong nostalgia goggles, that I never really thought about this before, but yeah, Eren is kinda bitchy in the early parts of the story. I don't know if I agree with this opinion, but I do see where they're coming from.

Guest account: "I hope Battra fucking dies."

Good, that means I succeeded.

The coming storm

-C-

A massive crowd of people was standing right in front of the rear gate of Trost which led deeper into wall Rose. Given the situation, one would expect them to be rushing through it as fast as they possibly can, and they would have been if not for the fact that the gate was blocked by a horse wagon that filled up the whole gate. The horses pulling the wagon had suddenly stopped halfway through and refused to budge no matter how hard the riders tried to get them to move, blocking the exit for everyone as a result. The owner of the wagon, Dimo Reeves, the head of the Trost merchant guild, was shouting at the crowd, ordering them to help push the cart. Carla Jaeger and Daisuke Serizawa watched all this from the sidelines, absolutely disgusted.

"This is insane," Carla growled. "People's lives are at stake here. What's so important about some damn wagon?"

"There's nothing we can do now except wait. We won't be able to convince selfish people like him," Serizawa said. "Believe me, Carla. I would know."

"I take it you've had experience with this particular breed of bastard before?"

"More than I'd care to admit."

They both then heard Dimo shout out, "HURRY UP AND PUSH THIS DAMN THING! IT'S NOT LIKE YOUR LIVES ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN WHAT'S IN THIS WAGON, EVEN IF YOU SAVE UP FOR ALL YOUR LIFE! IF YOU WANNA LIVE, THEN HELP US PUSH THIS THROUGH! THERE'S A REWARD IN IT IF YOU HELP!"

Carla couldn't take any more of this and sat up in her wheelchair while screaming, "YOU SELFISH SON OF A BITCH! DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THE TITANS ARE ONLY AFTER PEOPLE!? YOUR STUPID CARGO CAN WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE PEOPLE WHO GIVE IT VALUE CAN LEAVE! NOW GET OUT OF THE WAY!"

"Carla, this is pointless..." Serizawa murmured as he was reminded of many conversations he had in the past.

Dimo looked down at Carla and snapped back, "SHUT YOUR DAMN MOUTH, LADY! CRIPPLES LIKE YOU ARE NOTHING BUT DEADWEIGHT ANYWAY, SO WHY DON'T YOU DO US ALL A FAVOR AND-"

Suddenly, a loud rumbling noise silenced everyone, forcing them to look toward the streets. They saw an Abnormal Titan running straight towards the crowd with webs dangling off of its arms, carrying debris that swung around like a pair of wrecking balls, smashing through buildings that it passed by.

"PUSH IT THROUGH, DAMN IT! OR THAT THING IS GONNA KILL US ALL!"

The crowd began panicking and pushed against each other, while Serizawa and Carla were shoved to the ground.

The Titan was being pursued by a group of soldiers who were unable to get close enough to slash its weak spot. Just in the nick of time, Mikasa flew in and cut the titan's nape out with a single swipe, sending it crashing to the ground in front of the terrified crowd. Mikasa landed on top of the Titan's carcass. After noting that her blades were severely dulled by her attack, she looked down at the crowd, wondering why everything was being delayed. She then jumped down when she saw Carla and Serizawa in the crowd, Serizawa helping Carla back into her wheelchair.

"Mom, are you hurt?" Mikasa asked as she reached Carla.

"I'm fine Mikasa, but it's not me you should be worried about," Carla then gestured to the crowd. "Please, you have to help these people."

"Hey, you!" Dimo shouted to Mikasa, who kept her back turned to him. "Quit wasting your time with that legless freak and get back to putting your life on the line for us civilians! You may be a soldier, but now's not the time to act like a selfish little hero!"

Mikasa slowly stood up, and Carla's face changed from a look of relief when seeing Mikasa was okay to complete, abject horror. "Selfish? You're calling me selfish? You, the man who probably has never even seen a titan before today, are calling me selfish?"

Dimo initially scoffed at her, until she actually turned around, and he saw the look on her face. It was easily the most terrifying thing he had seen in his life. The gaze she gave radiated the most intense feeling of hatred that he had ever seen on any human face in his life.

"You, the man who allows others to die for the sake of your own profit, including children, are calling me selfish?"

"D-DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! I'M WARNING YOU, I'LL-"

Mikasa used the jet in her ODM Gear to boost herself right up to Dimo and land right in front of him, jamming her blade into the wagon right next to his head, while holding the other up to his neck.

" **You**, the walking, talking corpse who doesn't even have the courtesy to rot in the ground, are calling **me...** selfish?"

"P-p-p-" Dimo seemed to be wavering between "please" and "pull" before finally pushing out, "Pull the damn wagon out of the way."

And so, the cart was pulled out of the way. As Mikasa sheathed both her blades, she saw a woman and her daughter walk up to her and thank her for her help. Mikasa smiled and saluted the two of them. After everyone was evacuated, Mikasa spent a bit of time talking to Carla and Serizawa.

"I'm very proud of you, Mikasa," Carla praised. "I can't imagine what would have happened if you weren't here."

"I should have gotten here sooner," Mikasa replied. "If I had known that bastard was delaying the evacuation effort, I could have stopped him, and you two would be on the other side by now."

"You shouldn't blame yourself for other people's crimes. There's no way you could have even known about all this, to begin with, Mikasa, so don't blame yourself." Carla took Mikasa's hand and smiled at her. "What matters is that the evacuation was successful."

Mikasa smiled, "Yeah... I guess it was. I'm glad you're okay. Now Eren won't have to worry anymore."

"Speaking of which, where are he and Armin? I thought you three would have been together in a time like this."

"We were assigned to different groups. Since I was highly skilled, they moved me back here to help with evacuation while Eren and Armin were in the front guard."

"Front guard?" Serizawa questioned, "But that means they'll be facing the incoming titans, **AND** K-" Serizawa paused for a moment, remembering these people didn't know the species name for the other threat yet. "The giant spider. Wouldn't it make more sense for you to be there?"

Carla nearly had a heart attack at that prospect. She clutched Mikasa by the uniform and begged her to go find them.

"O-of course mom. I'll make sure I get to Eren as soon as possible."

And with that, Mikasa rocketed off, stopping to regroup with her team before telling them she was going to check in on the front guard, and also change out her blades. Meanwhile, Serizawa grasped Carla's hand gently and tried to calm her down while he pushed her through the gate. As they arrived on the other side, Carla took a deep breath

and counted down from ten while Serizawa gently massaged her shoulders, which did well to help her calm down.

"Th-thank you, Daisuke..." Carla said. Serizawa nodded slightly.

"You're welcome," he said. "Don't worry, Carla. Wherever your son is, I'm sure he's just fine."

-E-

Eren was neigh catatonic, the last few moments playing in his head over and over again. He and Armin were celebrating a successful plan, killing two birds with one stone by getting the giant spider and the Titans to fight each other. Then, an abnormal walked up behind the two of them. He pushed Armin out of the way, told him to run, and now... he was here. Trapped inside the stomach of a titan, swimming in its internal fluids and surrounded by the bodies of people who fell to this one titan. He even recognized a few of them as his comrades from the 104th.

Tears welled up in his eyes as thoughts of his loved ones wormed their way into his mind, and how he had failed them. Mom... Mikasa... he promised the two that he would survive, and return to them. He failed. Armin... he promised him that one day they would leave these damn walls and go to the ocean together. He failed. Father... he promised him that he would take care of his mother while he was gone. He failed. He failed everyone.

'Why? Why does this keep happening?' Eren thought, 'You took my home... you took mom's leg... you took all these people's lives... why? Why are you so hell-bent on taking everything from us?'

Eren's eyes began to grow heavy as the heat began to overtake him, and he began to sink. Out of desperation, he tried to hold himself up against the wall of the titan's stomach, but that only delayed the inevitable. As Eren's vision slowly turned to darkness, he thought back to happier times when he was a child one last time, and silently prayed that Mikasa, Armin, and his mother would make it out of this

nightmare alive. However, before his eyes shut completely, he heard something. Just above him, he heard a voice speaking to him.

"Eren... if you can hear me... I'm sorry..." Mikasa said.

-M-

Several minutes earlier...

Mikasa flew through the streets of Trost in search of Eren's squad, narrowly avoiding encounters with Titans. As she rocketed through the city of Trost, she paused and landed, looking up in silent dread as she stared upon a colossal web created by the giant spider, reaching up from the ground she was standing on and stretching diagonally for miles, leading all the way up to the top of the wall. Within the web, she saw countless titans entangled in it, all struggling to break free, their struggles ultimately in vain, as the webs were simply too sturdy and too flexible for the titans to break, and too adhesive for the titans to escape.

Mikasa eventually snapped out of her trance when she noticed a group of her fellow soldiers all huddled up on some rooftops close to the web. Mikasa was initially confused as to why none of them were trying to escape to HQ, having heard the signal to retreat. As Mikasa looked back to HQ, her question answered itself when she saw titans swarming the building, trapping the suppliers inside the building in the process. Based on that, she deduced that they wouldn't be getting new fuel or blades any time soon.

Mikasa grappled her way over to them, and upon landing, heard Sasha trying to rally everyone together with words of encouragement. Her attempts were futile, but Mikasa was happy... ish to see Sasha had overcome the terror she showed back at the barracks.

Upon scanning the crowd, Mikasa noticed Eren's squad and became hopeful that Eren did survive. Her hope grew when she approached them and saw Armin sitting there. Although, she noticed that Armin

looked a bit worse for wear, curled up in the fetal position and holding his head in his hands.

"Excuse me," Mikasa said to Eren's squad members. "I know this may sound selfish given the situation, but do any of you know where Eren is?"

Upon hearing Mikasa, Armin's eyes widened in terror as he realized that she would have to find out sooner or later. After the rest of the squad fell silent, she turned to Armin, who was terrified and questioning what he could even say to her, feeling utterly useless as she knelt by his side.

"Armin? Do you know where Eren is?!" Mikasa asked with desperation in her voice. Armin said nothing.

"Armin?!" Mikasa asked again as she shook her friend. He looked up at Mikasa, and she recoiled upon seeing her friend's red, puffy eyelids, clearly strained from sobbing for so long.

"I... he..." Armin clutched his hair as tears rolled down his cheeks. "I-I'm so sorry, Mikasa... but he's..." Armin collapsed against her, bawling her eyes out once more while clutching her jacket. "I'M SORRY!" he screamed. "IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME! EREN SAVED MY LIFE, AND IT MEANT NOTHING!"

Mikasa held onto Armin, biting back her own tears as the weight of this news came crashing down upon her.

Eren was dead.

Mikasa slowly stood up, letting go of Armin, then turned to the other members of the squad with a cold, empty expression.

"How did he die?"

Mina then pointed at a titan that was lying on the ground, practically glued there by a glob of webbing. Its midsection, left arm, left leg,

and part of its face was exposed, the rest engulfed in the same webbing that formed the gigantic web which surrounded Trost. Mikasa stared at the titans for a few moments and then began walking towards the edge of the roof she was on. That walk quickly turned into a sprint as she leaped off of the roof and boosted through the air with her ODM Gear while letting out a blood-curdling scream. Soon enough, she had reached the titan, who tried to reach out to her and devour her, only for its entire hand to be shredded to ribbons and its arm to be severed at the shoulder. The titan groaned and flailed in place while Mikasa stabbed one of her blades into the Titan's stomach and began ripping away at it, splattering its blood all over her, which quickly evaporated.

The other cadets watched as Mikasa stabbed into the body of the titan again and again while screaming Eren's name. Eventually, however, Reiner and Bertholdt noticed titans closing in on the area and warned the others about it, which prompted Jean to go try and rescue Mikasa, with Sasha and Marco joining him, Marco being willing to follow Jean regardless, and Sasha wanting to save her "friend" from getting eaten by the titans. The three landed around Mikasa and attempted to pull her off of him and carry her away, but Mikasa struggled violently against them.

"Come on, Mikasa! We have to get the hell out of here!" Jean shouted.

"You heard him, Mikasa," Marco pleaded. "We have to run before more titans show up, or worse!"

"NO! I CAN'T LEAVE EREN HERE ALONE! I KNOW I CAN SAVE HIM!" Mikasa cried out with tears streaming down her face.

"Mikasa, even if he is alive, there's nothing you can do," Sasha reasoned. "Now come on! I can't let any more of my friends die today!"

"GET OFF OF ME RIGHT NOW!" Mikasa screamed.

With that, Mikasa threw all of them off at once and got back to where she was, digging further into the Titan's thick hide. Jean and Marco, seeing that there was no reasoning with her, decided to make a run for it while they still could. Armin was taken away by the rest of the group as they fled the area. Sasha stayed behind, climbing back onto the titan body and sitting by her friend, hoping that she could see sense and run away with her. Until then, however, She would stand by her side and protect her as the titans appeared around them.

Eventually, however, Mikasa grew tired and collapsed, her sword embedded deep within the titan's body as she tried to catch her breath. Sasha meanwhile, after killing three titans, was almost completely out of gas. She had enough to last maybe a little longer, but not nearly enough left over to take out any more titans from her position. Sasha retracted both her blades and knelt down by Mikasa's side as Mikasa began speaking to the titan's stomach, in hopes that Eren would hear her.

"Eren... If you can hear me, I'm sorry..." Mikasa said while panting. "I should have been there for you like I always have been. I know you find it annoying whenever I keep on meddling in your business... but please understand... my point of view."

Eren looked up to the ceiling and tried to listen more closely.

"You saved me that day... when I was kidnapped. You gave me the strength to fight back against this cruel world." She clutched her scarf and smiled weakly. "You gave me a new home... a new family... a new sense of purpose. I can't thank you enough for being by your side..."

Sasha smiled at her and wrapped her arm around Mikasa's shoulder.

"I... I love you Eren. Not just as family, but as something much more than that. And even if you don't feel the same way, that's okay... because as long as you're in my life, I'll never give up on you, just like you never gave up on me or your mother."

Eren stared up in shock and blinked a few times. "M-Mikasa... I..."

Sasha then screamed, catching Mikasa's attention as a titan reached down for them. Mikasa stabbed at its fingers, but it was no good, as the titan grabbed both of them in its massive hand, undeterred by Mikasa and Sasha repeatedly stabbing its hand.

Eren tightened his fists so hard that they drew blood. Mikasa's words reached deep into his psyche, and his desire to save everyone boiled back up to the surface. He pounded against the walls of the stomach furiously as he screamed furiously.

"I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE! I HAVE TO PROTECT THEM! MOM! MIKASA! ARMIN! I'LL PROTECT EVERYONE!" Eren roared as loud as he could, and an electric aura began to form around his body, so bright that it could be seen from within the titan.

And suddenly, the titan exploded.

The explosion blasted away the titan that was about to eat Mikasa and Sasha, and the two girls tumbled onto the ground. Mikasa looked up and where the portly, bearded titan once stood, now stood a ripped, 15-meter-tall, black-haired titan with a set of exposed teeth and emerald eyes. Mikasa's eyes widened as she recognized certain features of the titan. The hair, the eyes, the rage radiating off of it. All of it clued her in to who this titan was.

"Must... save... everyone..." It thought as it grabbed the titan that was attacking Mikasa and Sasha by the neck and ripped its head clean off. "Mom... Mikasa... Armin..."

"Eren?!"

As the titan dropped the lifeless body of the other titan to the ground, its eyes suddenly widened, and it looked down on the two girls, Mikasa looking up at it with wide, misty eyes, and Sasha looking at Mikasa with confusion and surprise.

"Mikasa...? Why did you call that titan... Eren?"

Eren looked down at his hands and was horrified as he realized what he had become. He shuddered and placed a hand on his head while using a house to support himself.

'I-I-I'm a... a Titan?' Eren questioned.

As he thought this, he saw Mikasa and Sasha grapple up to the top of the building using as little fuel as possible. Eren, at first, didn't know what was going on, but after a while, he realized that this must have been what Gigan meant by "hybrids." Somehow, Eren became part titan. This was probably also why he was able to speak to Gigan. Eren's train of thought was interrupted however when Mikasa spoke up.

"Eren?" She asked. "Is that really you?"

Eren's titan opened its mouth, and instead of the usual grunts and growls that come out of titans... Eren's titan spoke. It was difficult for him to formulate words, but he was able to speak to them nonetheless.

"Yes... it's... me..." he said.

Sasha nearly fainted upon hearing him speak, while Eren looked down at his hands.

"Not sure... how I became... Titan..." Eren said. "But... I know that... I can... use power... to help... comrades..." Eren then patted Mikasa on the head with his index finger, making her blush and squeak softly, which both Eren and Sasha found adorable. "Comrades... and family..."

Eren then noticed two more titans approaching them. One jumped up at him, baring its teeth at him, which he proceeded to punch right in the mouth, snapping its jaws in two, while the other one attempted to charge him, only for him to smack its head off. Several cadets who

were trying to escape by jumping from rooftop to rooftop were taken off guard when a titan's head flew over them. Eren then proceeded to stomp on the nape of both titans, killing them instantly.

Eren turned his back to Mikasa and Sasha and gestured for them to hop on. The two anchored themselves onto his shoulders and directed him towards the rest of the cadets, who appeared to be heading towards HQ under the leadership of Jean and Reiner.

-G-

10 hours ago...

People fled in terror as a massive herd of monsters lumbered through the streets in a Marleyan city, migrating towards their usual breeding grounds. The monsters' bodies were charcoal gray with lighter underbellies and jaws, and piercing red eyes. Despite being mammalian, the creatures' bodies resembled arachnids, with eight legs instead of four, each leg being long and spindly, with three joints in each limb. The females walked on six legs, with two smaller legs curled up against their chests, while the males flew through the air. As the creatures rampaged through the city on their migration, the people of Marlay attempted to deploy old, worn-out Markelite towers and mazer tanks, as well as standard military weapons in hopes of stopping the creatures. However, the females were simply too powerful, their hides too sturdy and shrugged their attacks off like nothing, and the males were able to keep clear of the Markelite towers completely.

The monsters effortlessly crushed their weapons and slaughtered their people. Even their three available titan shifters, the Beast, Warhammer, and Cart titans, were powerless to stop these monsters and weren't even unleashed for fear of them being killed by the titan monsters.

As their path of destruction continued, and people fell by the hundreds, a family of three ran down the street, attempting to escape the stampede. They were the last three left living within their district,

and they were about to be wiped out as well, as the daughter looked up and saw a male swoop down, the force of his flight flattening entire neighborhoods. As the mother and father held onto their daughter, accepting their fates, they suddenly heard the sound of a revved chainsaw and then opened their eyes to find themselves between the two halves of a dead male.

The family then looked up and were awestruck to see Gigan flying above them. The black angel smiled at them and gestured for them to flee, which they did. Gigan then looked at the heard of kaiju, which were all roaring at him angrily.

{70 female Mutos, 32 males.} Gigan said to himself. He then grabbed a male trying to pull a sneak attack with his tail claw and blasted its head off with a jet booster on his foot. **{31.}** Gigan smirked cockily. **{Sounds like a decent workout.}**

Gigan unleashed a storm of blades from his chest that rained down upon the female Mutos. The army of Mutos then charged at him, and he returned the favor, clashing with the first female Muto to approach him, causing the ground beneath them to rumble.

Attack Titan vs Kumonga

-A-

After their hiding place was overrun by Titans, all the remaining cadets that were alive were making a break for HQ, leaping from rooftop to rooftop, swinging through the air with their grappling cables, and using what little fuel they had left to soar for brief amounts of time, steering clear of any titans in the process. It wasn't easy by any means, but the group grew closer and closer to HQ at high speeds. That was until they were all ambushed by an entire group of titans.

One of these titans snatched Mina Carolina's ODM cables while she was swinging over the streets. Mylius, who was carrying Thomas on his back, turned around upon hearing her screams, despite Thomas' protests, only for both of them to be grabbed by one of the Titans. Slowly but surely, more and more of these people were captured by the titans, several of them killed. The rest of the group stopped on a roof and watched in horror as all of their friends and allies were slaughtered one by one. Jean especially was disgusted with himself, watching helplessly as Mina was slowly swallowed right in front of him. Armin meanwhile was cowering in terror as he watched the members of his squad be devoured just like they did with Eren, and he was once again helpless to stop them.

However, just as her feet were about to slip between the titan's teeth, its naip was suddenly sliced clean out by a sudden blur of motion. Jean and Armin both looked down to see Mikasa land just as the titan fell, steam billowing from its neck. Seizing the opportunity, Jean ordered that everyone keep running. However, Armin stayed behind as he noticed a titan that had Mylius and Thomas firmly gripped in its hand slowly approaching his friend.

"M-MIKASA! LOOK OUT!" He screamed.

Mikasa turned around and jumped out of the way of the titan's swipe. She tried to fly out of there but found that she had run out of fuel. Cornered, she braced herself to leap out of the way again, only for both Armin and Sasha to jump in, Sasha slicing through the Titan's index finger and thumb and Armin cutting down the titan's other hand, releasing the two men trapped in it. Armin then grabbed Mikasa up off the ground and back up on the roof, with Sasha following them.

Upon seeing the three soldiers land, the titan attempted to lunge down and eat all three of them, but a wooden pole was suddenly thrown right through its head. Armin slowly turned his head to the source of the pole, and then gasped in shock when he saw another titan charging at their location, gripping another titan's neck in his hand. The muscular Rogue Titan swung the other titan over his head and slammed it down onto his prey.

The titan then stomped onto its weapon's naip and roared victoriously while Sasha jumped up and cheered, "WOOHOO! GO EREN!"

"E-Eren?" Armin murmured. He then looked up and saw the titan look down at the group, giving them a thumbs up.

"Yes," Mikasa answered. "That's Eren. We don't know how or why, all we know is that he's here, he's a titan, and he's helping us."

Eren nodded at Mikasa's claims, then looked down and saw the surviving members of his squad on the ground around him, all having overheard this revelation and being equally as shocked as Armin. Eren carefully lifted them into the palm of his hand and placed them onto the roof along with one other survivor, Ymir, who appeared the most gobsmacked out of all of them.

"Hey, Eren!" Sasha cried, drawing his attention as she pointed to HQ. "Everyone's heading to resupply! Any chance you could get us there?"

Eren nodded and turned around. "Hop... on..." He growled.

Everyone anchored themselves to his back, and he began running towards HQ, quickly catching up with the rest of the cadets, who were all horrified to see him approaching. However, Armin leaped up onto Eren's head and explained to them that he was not a threat as quickly as he could, before letting them know that he'd explain everything once they got inside. When the cadets began asking for proof, Eren provided it by putting all of his momentum into a powerful punch to a 13-meter-titan's jaw that completely obliterated its head. This very quickly silenced most of the scouts, though Jean in particular was still on edge. After clearing a path for the cadets to get into HQ, Eren stood by HQ and defended everyone from the surrounding titans while Mikasa and Sasha explained everything they knew.

"After growing too tired to keep digging, I began talking," Mikasa said before correcting herself. "Pouring out my heart into the titan's stomach, hoping beyond all hope that Eren would hear me from within there."

"As she was doing that, a titan began approaching us," Sasha added. "I didn't have enough fuel left to kill it, so it managed to grab us... but then, as the titan was about to eat us, the bearded titan's stomach began to glow, before swelling rapidly and exploding. The next thing we knew, we were standing at the feet of a massive titan that seemed to have a vendetta against his own kind. Well, that is until Mika here realized that they weren't his kind at all."

"I was able to confirm this when I tried speaking to him, and he spoke back, personally assuring us that he was in fact Eren," Mikasa concluded. "Also, Sasha, you do not have my permission to call me nicknames."

"Do I at least have permission to tell them about the cute moment you and Eren had?" Sasha asked, peaking everyone's attention at the idea of Mikasa being "cute," and making Mikasa blush profusely.

"A-ABSOLUTELY NOT!" Mikasa shouted, prompting disappointed sighs from many people in the crowd, as well as Sasha.

After their explanation, Armin decided to speak up. "So... if that really is Eren, then is there any way to change him back to normal?" He asked.

"Why would you want to?" Connie asked, before making an ecstatic gesture towards his gigantic comrade, "Just look at him! He's a titan killing machine!"

"Yes, but he's also a titan, himself," Armin said. "It'd be nigh impossible for us to get him to safety should he be overwhelmed while he's in that state. And even if we could, how are we going to explain this to our commanding officers? They may just try to kill him on the spot."

"I'm sure he can turn back," Ymir interjected. "And we should probably find a way to turn him back, and quick. He looks like he's starting to slow down."

They all then looked out to see steam start to billow off of Eren's body. The titans that he was previously killing with one hit were now surviving several, and Eren frequently had to take breathers after killing several titans at once. Additionally, the titans themselves were starting to get more hits in on him, nearly forcing him to the ground on one occasion.

"Damn it..." Jean muttered before he turned back to the cadets. "Alright, everyone with enough fuel in their tanks to fight, keep those titans off of Eren!"

The group then nodded, and the troops with the most fuel in their tanks took off to back Eren up and take out the last few Titans approaching the building, while Mikasa, whose tanks were practically empty, joined them so that she could talk to him.

Armin stayed behind though, not because he was low on fuel, he actually had quite a bit left, but because he noticed something about the way Ymir was acting. She looked... well, he didn't really understand what that look was. Fear? Humiliation? Shock? Confusion? Whatever it was, Ymir's facial expression was overflowing with it after what she said. As if she didn't actually want to say it.

Krista noticed this as well and gently grasped Ymir's hand. "Are you okay, Ymir?" She asked, snapping Ymir out of it.

"Y-yeah... I'm fine, Krista..." Ymir gently ruffled Krista's hair. "Don't worry about me, doll. I just need some time to think."

Ymir then left the room and went into the next one over while Armin and Krista were left wondering what was going on in her head.

" Why did you make me do that?"

" Hey! Don't give me that! They'd be sitting ducks without that information!"

" I'd think after what you've been through, you'd be more hesitant to do that to people."

" Normally, yes, but with that Kumonga roaming around in conjunction with the titans, we need Eren to learn the ropes ASAP."

"... You're right. In moments where people's lives are at stake, personal space isn't exactly top priority."

-E-

A mindless titan swiped for Mina Carolina as she swung around it. After cutting a chunk out of its ankle, she rocketed away, leaving the titan open for Eren to jump in and bite out the naip with ferocious force. After leaving the steaming corpse to fade away, he took a

moment to catch his breath. As he leaned against HQ, he watched with pride as his comrades dealt with all the injured or small titans that had escaped their fate at his hands, though also mentally chastised himself.

'Damn, I should have finished them off!' Eren thought. 'If my comrades weren't here to help me, they all probably would have ganged up on me by now.'

Eren's thoughts were paused when he heard Mikasa running up behind him and turned to face her. He crouched down slightly so the two could talk eye to eye.

"Eren, I have something I need to ask you," she said. "I'll make it quick since we probably don't have much time before more threats arrive. Do you think you can transform back to your normal self?"

Eren raised an eyebrow, but Mikasa explained that Armin and the others had some concerns about him while he was in this form. Eren nodded and then growled softly before speaking.

"Still in... normal form... kind of..." Eren replied.

"Hugh? What do you mean?"

Eren pointed to the back of his neck. "Can feel body... in titan body... can move body... in titan body... Maybe my body... can break free?"

Mikasa and Eren looked around to make sure the coast was clear. After finding nothing but smoke and celebrating soldiers, Eren took a knee, closed his eyes, and tried to focus on moving only his human body. Within the titan, Eren wriggled and writhed against the veins and muscles holding him in place, before eventually pulling his hand out of the body. A huge gust of steam burst out of Eren's nape as he struggled with all his might, slowly lurching out of his body with all his might. Mikasa jumped down from the spot she was standing and

helped Eren out of his titan. His ODM gear was missing, as was his jacket, but he was still fully clothed, and conscious.

After getting Eren back inside, the cadets all gathered around Eren as he supported himself against Mikasa. They began asking a barrage of questions that began to overwhelm him until Mikasa shut the crowd up by holding both her blades up and banging them together, the resulting CLANG silencing the crowd. Eren then took a seat on a nearby chair while he caught his breath.

"You alright, Eren?"

Eren looked up to see Mina standing over him. He sighed softly and smiled.

"I'm fine, just tired is all. Nothing I can't handle."

"Do you think maybe it had something to do with your time as a titan?" Armin theorized.

"I'd say so," Eren replied before looking up at Armin with a determined smile. "Don't worry about me though. I can still fight." Eren stood up to prove his point, but stumbled about, and would have collapsed outright had it not been for Mikasa catching him.

"Not yet, you can't," she scolded. "Look at you! You can barely stand, much less fight!"

"Mikasa-"

"Mikasa, nothing!" She interrupted, "I already thought you died once. I don't want to have to go through that feeling again, so please, get some rest. You've fought enough, today. We can take it from here."

Eren was about to argue, but remembered Mikasa's confession while he was in the titan's stomach and ultimately lamented. "Okay, fine. I'll rest **for now**. But once I get my second wind, I'm coming to help you guys."

"Deal," Mikasa replied.

With that, Eren sat back down. Mikasa handed him a flask of water she had on her before going downstairs with the rest of the group, while Connie was wondering what they were "taking from here." He was then reminded that the supply chambers were still infested with titans, so they needed to figure out a plan. Thankfully, Armin had already come up with one, and with the guns that were brought in courtesy of the Military Police, Armin began explaining it.

"As it stands, we're looking at seven titans, all of the four meters tall variety, in the supply room," he said. "If we time this perfectly, this much ammo oughta be enough to do the trick. Here's how it will go: we lower a crew down into the supply room via the lift, meeting the titans at eye level. Once all the titans are in range, the group fires in all directions simultaneously. Then comes the hard part. Before the titans can recover, seven of us will swoop down from the rafters and strike the naip. And that's the plan. All our lives are on the line, so if we screw up, we're dead. It's quite the risk for one attack, but it's our only chance. Seven soldiers have to slay seven titans at the same time, so we're going to need the seven soldiers most physically adept with their parring blades."

"Sounds like a sound plan!" Reiner praised.

"When you get right down to it, the risk is about the same no matter who goes," Annie said.

"Look, I'm willing to be talked out of this," Armin said, his voice now softer and lacking in confidence. "One half-baked plan can't be all we've got."

"Half-baked? Come on, don't be so hard on yourself," Marco said. "For our only option, it's pretty well thought out. If we give it our all, we can pull this off."

"You just have to be confident in yourself," Mikasa added. "You're a better strategist than you give yourself credit for. That mind of yours

saved Eren and me more than once."

"W-what? When did I ever save you?" Armin wondered as everyone got into position.

"You didn't realize it at the time," Mikasa then headed to get suited up. "We can talk about it later."

With that, everyone got into position, with Jean, Reiner, Annie, Connie, Sasha, Mikasa, and Bertholdt up in the rafters, while everyone else was lowered in the lift, their buckshot rifles at the ready as they waited for the titans to notice them. At first, the titans were wandering about mindlessly as they usually did, until eventually, their vacant, dead eyes locked onto the soldiers in the lift, and their ravenous hunger beckoned them towards the soldiers. Sweat trickled down the cadets' faces as they watched the titans grow closer and closer. With every thunderous step, the cadets grew more and more terrified, and whimpers could be heard from the group as the titans grew closer and closer. Eventually, the titans were so close that their eyes were practically pressed up against the barrels of the guns that were being pointed at them.

And then...

"FIRE!" Marco screamed.

All at once, the cadets unloaded their rifles, blowing out the titans' eyes and lighting up the dark room. The titans recoiled in pain and the soldiers in the rafters then jumped down. Five titans collapsed to the ground, their naips now severed. However, there were two scouts that missed their mark, Connie and Sasha. They both nervously walked backward as the titans turned to see their assailants.

Sasha screamed as the titan facing her leaned down and pounced at her, but before it could devour her, Mikasa had gotten onto it and cut out its naip, Annie doing the same for Connie.

"MIKASA!" Sasha screamed while clutching Mikasa's jacket. "YOU SAVED MY LIFE!" "Are you okay?" Mikasa asked.

"BECAUSE OF YOU, I AM!" Sasha sobbed.

"Good. Now ge-" But before Mikasa could finish the command, Sasha jumped up and wrapped her arms around her. Mikasa grunted and stumbled a bit as Sasha bawled her eyes out over her shoulder.

"THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU! I KNEW YOU CARED ABOUT ME! I PROMISE I'LL DO WHATEVER I CAN TO RETURN THE FAVOR!"

As Sasha continued to bawl her eyes out and scream words of gratitude over Mikasa's shoulder, Mikasa hooked her arm under Sasha's armpit and grasped her scarf, thinking back to how Eren saved her from a mob of human traffickers when she first met him as a child. A few tears rolled down her cheek as well, and she hugged her food-loving friend back.

After watching this from a distance, Annie turned around to refer to the person she had just saved. "Don't even think about doing that to me," she said coldly.

"Wasn't planning on it..." Connie replied awkwardly.

"THEY'RE ALL DEAD!" Jean announced. "START LOADING UP ON SUPPLIES!"

"YES SIR!" Everyone said.

After fueling up their ODM gear, Mikasa and Armin went back to the lift so they could go get Eren and tell him the good news. They hurried back upstairs and into the room they left him in, where they found him taking a nap on a desk. Mikasa shook him awake, and Eren groaned softly before getting back on his feet, feeling rejuvenated after that nap of his. Armin and Mikasa then told him

about what happened, and Eren was happy to hear that everyone was okay.

As the three went back down the lift, the dark clouds outside, which had been everpresent since Eren was eaten by a titan, had begun to form into a thunderstorm. The storm that was brewing was ignored by most of the group, as things were finally starting to look up for them, but unbeknownst to them, that storm was nature's way of reminding mankind that they weren't out of the woods just yet.

Eren came down to see everyone refueling their gear. Several people were happy to see him up and ready to fight again, including what remained of his squad, who he went to go check in on.

"Mina! Thomas! Mylius! You guys are okay!"

"Thanks to you, we are," Mina said. "You showing up all titaned-out saved our lives."

Eren then looked around. "Did Nac make it too?"

The group solemnly shook their heads.

"He was killed just before the three of you arrived," Thomas said.

Eren clenched his fist in frustration as tears welled up in his eyes. 'Damn it!' He thought. 'I couldn't-' He suddenly felt Thomas place a hand on his shoulder.

"It's okay, Eren. You're not a god. You can't save everyone."

Eren brushed Thomas' hand off. "Yeah... sure."

"You still saved us," Mina said. "And you helped save so many other people today by killing so many titans."

"But I could have done more," Eren said. "No, I should have done more! If only I knew I had this kind of power sooner, I could have made sure we weren't in this situation, to begin with. I could have

killed every titan that came through the gate before they even killed one person!"

"Speaking of titans, don't any of you think it's weird that no titans came towards HQ yet?" Mylius asked.

"Maybe they got distracted by other people still in Trost?" Thomas suggested.

Mina immediately shot that down. "Evacuation started as soon as the wall was kicked in. Even if a few people were left behind, it wouldn't be enough to offset us."

"Then maybe the spider is distracting them?"

"But if that's the case, and it's still not dead, then how strong is that thing?" Mylius asked.

That thought worried the group especially. If it was strong enough that it could fight titans all day and still not succumb to its wounds, its power must be like nothing they've ever seen before.

After dwelling on that for a bit, Connie approached Eren and asked him how on Earth he was able to turn into a titan.

"I... don't know," Eren said. "All I know is that I trigger the transformation by hurting myself."

'Wait, how do I know that?' Eren thought.

"Well, however you're doing it, I'm glad you are. If it weren't for you, we'd all be royally screwed," Connie said. "We all owe you one."

"He's right," Marco said, joining in on the conversation. "You were incredible out there, Eren. You're nothing short of a hero."

"A-a hero?" Eren didn't really see himself that way. He was just fulfilling his duty and his vow to protect everyone. Before this wave of praise could continue, however, everyone was startled when they

heard a loud crash, followed by ground shaking rumbling, and a bunch of people screaming.

Eren saw everyone running by him, and then saw one person get trapped underneath a massive spider leg. One which belonged to the giant spider that the cadets were lucky enough to have been avoiding for a good long while. But now, it had found them, and it was hungry for their flesh. Eren grabbed the man's hand and pulled him out from under the spider's grip, then ran towards the exit. Mikasa, who was fleeing from the leg, turned around to see Eren running towards it and followed after him, with Armin joining the two.

Once close to the door, Eren grabbed a nearby shard of wood and stabbed it into his hand. Lightning surged out of his body, and an explosion of steam blew a massive hole in HQ, causing the giant spider to jolt back and crawl away.

A section of the roof came crashing down, and everyone screamed in terror. However, those screams turned into cheers when they saw Eren lifting the roof with his bare hands. He then turned around and roared mightily as he threw the roof at the spider. It shattered against the eight-legged monstrosity, but it shrugged it off and hissed at Eren, who proceeded to arm himself with a wooden beam with a large clump of stone attached to it.

Eren charged at the spider and dodged underneath its swipes before taking a swing at its face. The spider caught the makeshift warhammer with one of its mandibles, then lifted Eren up and flicked him away, sending him flying into a house nearby, before snapping the beam in two and chucking the two halves of the warhammer aside. The majority of the cadets retreated at Jean's behest, however, Mikasa and Armin both stayed behind. Upon seeing that Mikasa was staying behind, Sasha, going against her instincts, turned back and went to join her.

Eren threw a pile of rubble off of himself, then scanned his surroundings for anything else he could use as a weapon. However, the spider didn't give him a chance to find a new weapon. With just

one massive leap, it closed the distance between itself and Eren. Eren was forced to dodge and roll out of the way when it tried to impale him with its legs, then give it a powerful kick to the leg, a technique he learned from Annie, which left the spider howling in pain and giving Eren the chance to make some more distance between himself and the spider while chucking debris at it again and again. The debris Eren threw soared with the speed of a gunshot as each throw hit true. The spider tried to counter this with its web spray, which forced Eren to flee even further away from it.

Armin, Mikasa, and Sasha watched the fight from overhead, zooming around on their ODM gear in an attempt to prevent any harm from coming to them. As they watched the battle unfold, the trio waited for an idea to come to them, their collective train of thought repeatedly being cut off by Sasha having to warn them of incoming debris or webs. While surveying the battle, Armin noticed that one of the boulders Eren was throwing hit the spider right in the eye, and it recoiled, covering the bleeding eye with one of its mandibles while Eren kept running.

"Did you see that?!" Armin asked.

"Yeah," Mikasa said.

"Of course," Sasha said.

Armin pondered for a moment, before nodding once. "I have an idea. Come on," Armin then rocketed off towards Eren, with Mikasa and Sasha following suit.

Eren took a moment to hide behind a house and catch his breath, while also attempting to make some sort of weapon out of the materials he had available to him. As he tried and failed to mash parts together and create any sort of weapon, Armin, Mikasa, and Sasha landed next to him, with Armin landing right on Eren's shoulder so he could explain his plan to Eren.

"Now, I only came up with this plan on the fly, but I have an idea for how we take down the giant spider," Armin said. Eren nodded and listened as Armin began to explain. "We need you to distract it by fighting it head-on like you've been doing, but I need you to try your best to keep out of its striking range by throwing rocks and debris whenever you can. You also need to stay to its sides, where you're still in the line of sight, but not within the radius where it can aim at you with its web spit."

"Why does he need to stay in the line of sight?" Mikasa asked.

"As I said, he's the distraction. While he's fighting it, you, me, and Sasha will move in on ODM and slice at the giant spider's eyes, blinding it. After that, Eren can close the distance and attack its legs. We probably won't be able to get all the legs before the creature adapts to our tactics. From what we've seen, this creature isn't like normal titans. It's clearly intelligent, so it will likely become more defensive. However, we don't need to take out all the legs. Just enough for it to be helpless against the final phase of my plan." Armin then points to a shard of the wall that the Colossal Titan kicked in close by them. "Eren just needs to pick up that piece of the wall and stab the spider in the head with it. This plan needs to go off without a hitch though. If even one of us messes up, it won't work."

Eren nodded. "Good plan..." He grumbled.

As they were about to put the plan into motion, however, Sasha pointed at the spider and warned everyone that it was on the move... and heading towards the wall.

-K-

Kumonga had grown weary of waiting for Eren to come out of his hiding place and trudged through the rubble of their battle, his minor wounds rapidly healing. Each step he took left holes in the pavement beneath him as he crept closer towards Wall Rose, eager to feast upon all the delectable creatures that may be hiding behind it. As he approached it, he was intercepted by two abnormal titans, one 15-

meters, the other only 10. Kumonga was annoyed, as the taller ones were always more difficult to deal with, but after fighting Eren, he found these two to be downright laughable by comparison, easily dispatching both of them at once.

However, as soon as Kumonga defeated the two mindless titans, he felt rubble pelt his back with a high amount of force. It turned around, and sure enough, Eren was standing there defiantly, readying another handful of debris to pelt Kumonga with. It flinched as Eren pelted it, but began advancing towards him regardless.

-E-

Eren backed up in an attempt to lead the giant spider away from the wall, continuing to throw rubble and boulders at the spider, until eventually, he saw Mikasa swing past its face, slashing its eye out like she would a titan naip. The spider howled in agony and flailed about as its eye gushed out sticky, green blood, which coated Mikasa as she swung out of the way, allowing Eren to send out another barrage of rubble.

Sasha ran across the spider's head before jetting down his face and taking out another eye. She and Mikasa swung past each other and landed on a building nearby while Armin flew in to do his part. Armin stabbed his blades into one of the center eyes, then cut into it almost getting blasted off by all the sticky, green blood shooting out of it. As the spider screeched in agony, Eren continued his long-range assault. Eventually, the three cadets were able to eliminate all of the spider's eyes, allowing Eren to rush in and deliver a powerful kick to one of the spider's legs, breaking it, the resulting snap sounding like a steel beam being snapped in two. Eren continued to attack the legs until he got to the fifth leg, where, just like Armin predicted, the spider began defending itself by curling all its legs in so that Eren couldn't break them.

Eren then took a step back, his face now caked in its blood. He marched over to the massive wall shard and hoisted it out of the ground. The thing was almost as big as him and weighed hundreds

of tons easily, but he was still able to lift it regardless. His steps cracked the pavement beneath him as he approached his enemy, who squirmed and writhed on the ground with its four broken legs. As he grew closer and closer, he quickened his pace into a speed walk, then into a jog, and then a full-on sprint as steam billowed off of his muscular body.

'As long as I live,' Eren thought. 'I will never let you, or any other nightmares like you oppress us anymore. Today, we. Are. FREE-'

Suddenly, the giant spider opened its mouth and shot out a blast of web with enough force to knock Eren miles away and knock away the boulder as well.

"W-WHAT!? HOW DID IT KNOW TO DO THAT!?" Sasha screamed. "I THOUGHT WE TOOK OUT ALL THE EYES! DID WE MISS ONE!?"

"N-no..." Armin stuttered as he slowly pointed towards the spider's legs. "L-I-look."

Sasha and Mikasa watched in horror as the spider's broken legs twisted and snapped back into place. It then wiped away the blood on its eyes, revealing that all of them had healed.

"I-IT CAN REGENERATE!?" Mikasa and Sasha screamed simultaneously.

The group then watched as Eren tried in vain to pull himself free of the webs he found himself entangled in. Thunder clapped and roared as Kumonga grew closer and closer, its paralyzing fangs ready to jab into Eren.

'This was hopeless,' Armin thought. 'We never stood a chance against it. And now, we're all going to be devoured.'

"COME ON!" Eren shouted from within his titan as he struggled to break free of the webbing, "BREAK ALREADY, DAMNIT! I'M NOT

GOING TO DIE HERE, I REFUSE TO DIE LIKE THIS!"

The spider reached out with one of its legs and dragged Eren into its maw so that it could bite out his naip, Eren still struggling furiously. Mikasa immediately ran in, her blades drawn, while Armin and Sasha tried to call for her to stay with them. She swooped in through the air and stabbed into the naip. Within it, Eren saw her cutting into it until she was able to expose Eren's upper body, and with all her might, she tried to pull him out. But she was too late, as they were both almost on the verge of being devoured by the spider.

However, just before it could consume both the cadets, a massive blade suddenly pierced the clouds and sliced clean through the spider's leg, cutting it off and causing it to drop the two as it howled in agony. It attempted to regenerate its arm, but before it could, a gigantic figure bathed in red light breached through the storm clouds, the shockwave it left behind parting them, and allowing the sun to shine down on the city. The metallic giant landed on top of the spider, impaling it on his bloodstained chainsaw hand. The spider screamed in pain and terror as the black angel sliced it in two.

Eren emerged from his titan body as it leaned against an abandoned house. As Mikasa, Armin, and Sasha landed around him and helped him out of his titan, Eren looked up at Gigan with an exhausted smile.

"Took you long enough..." And then Eren fainted.

Gigan was amazed to see that Eren really did have similar powers to Ymir. However, he couldn't think about that right now. At the moment, he just had to check for any other potential threats.

{Pelops, scan the area.} Gigan said. On cue, a chibi, orange dog with a blue bow on its back and a dogbone collar appeared in the bottom right-hand corner of his visor's HUD.

"*Already on it, Gigan!*" A loading bar then appeared in the center of the hud while Pelops did a little animation where he marched from

one side of the screen to the other while wearing garb resembling a stereotypical detective and holding a magnifying glass before the task was completed and Pelops disappeared.

Gigan was then shown a map of Trost and nodded as he looked at all the areas containing titans.

{Thanks, little guy.} Gigan then blasted off to exterminate the threat. He took to the skies once more and began his attack on the Titans.

-G-

Several minutes ago...

A sandstorm enveloped the entire city as ten female Mutos all pounded on the same area at once, while three male Mutos flew above them in circles like vultures, rhythmically using their EMP ability. The female Mutos were surrounded by dozens of corpses of other Mutos, all of them either sliced to bits, burned to a crisp, filled to the brim with blades, or some combination of what was previously mentioned. Beneath the ten Mutos lie the source of the dead Mutos, Gigan.

Now, as he was running on the most advanced pieces of technology humanity had ever created, Gigan was resistant to EMPs, and could take one and recover quickly. However, when the Mutos began using upwards of ten at once, that's when Gigan began struggling to hold in there. His systems were all completely scrambled, leaving him open to attack from the Mutos. Now trapped and unable to use any of his weapons, Gigan only had one thing left he could rely on, and that was his own innate skills.

Using everything he could muster, he managed to stab one female Muto in the chest with his tail claw, then slam it into another one next to her, breaking up the cycle completely. Gigan then slowly rose from his position, his roar crackling and stuttering as his nanometal's regeneration had been hampered considerably. The female Mutos all

soon got back up, forcing Gigan to maneuver out of the way of their attacks and counter accordingly with spiked knees to the gut and hooked kicks to the face.

One of the male Mutos noticed the females beginning to lose to Gigan even in this weakened state, and tried to swoop down and help them. However, it was his turn to EMP Gigan, which he remembered far too late, as Gigan's systems returned, and he sliced the male Muto in half. Gigan then rocketed off of the ground and used his eye beam to kill the other two, who dropped to the ground as balls of fire, before returning to the female Mutos.

The females all attempted to rush him down at once and managed to get him back into the position he was in before, but a short-range, scattershot version of Gigan's eyebeam knocked them all off of him. Unlike most weaker monsters, this didn't kill the females, but it left most of them severely wounded, allowing Gigan to finish them off one by one, dismembering each and every one of them.

When the battle was finished, Gigan took a moment to breathe and collect himself, before receiving an alert on his HUD.

{Woah, woah, woah, what's happening?} Gigan read the alert and found that something had happened inside Trost, but couldn't see what due to his older alert system only telling him that there was something happening and where it was happening.

" Need me to identify the threat?" A high-pitched voice asked.

{Gah! Who's there?}

" Sorry, allow me to introduce myself." A chibi dog then appeared in the bottom right-hand corner of Gigan's HUD. *"My name is Pelops, your personal assistant A.I. I was the one who woke you up when the titans attacked Wall Maria. I was actually created to wake you up during a time of crisis. Sadly, my range is woefully limited without your global scanning systems. My reach was essentially confined to that one island. I'm terribly sorry."*

{It's okay, really. As long as you're here to help mankind, you're good. Now, about that identification... }

" Ah, yes, I am able to identify any detected threats based on my databanks," Pelot then presented a rotating model of a Kumoga with its physical stats. *"Kumonga, Female, Adult, current location: Trost district."*

{TROST!?!} Gigan shouted, {That's where Eren is! We have to get there right now!}

" Agreed. However, there are some mild weather troubles there, so do be mindful of that," Pelops said while switching to an animation of himself in a raincoat.

Gigan chuckled at the very thought of any bad weather concerning him. **{I'll make sure to bring an umbrella.}** He said as he took to the skies and flew towards Paradis.

As Gigan flew away, Battra surveyed the land with a mild hint of frustration. He had hoped that Gigan would be killed by the Mutos, but humanity's greatest achievement still found a way to escape death. This worried Battra, more than anything, however, as the only thing keeping their deal intact was the fact that Gigan believed that Battra was the stronger of the two when in reality, Battra feared that if he and Gigan came to blows, he may be the one to fall.

-Author's note-

First of all, I'd like to thank everyone for all the praise this series has gotten so far. I hope you all enjoy the newest chapter in this ongoing tale.

And now it's time for another review reply section.

Guest: "Update please"

No

Guest: "Update please"

No

Chaotic: "I enjoyed this chapter {referring to chapter 5}. Like how the Mutos are migrating. Also like how Battra is in the story. He is harsh but fair."

This comment really makes me wish you could reply to reviews on FF, because this is such a different perspective from my first review, "I hope Battra fucking dies." I'd love to see an actual discussion about the characters in the comments. Anyway, thank you, Chaotic, and I hope you enjoy where the story goes in the future.

Guest: "Update please"

Okay, fine.

Aftermath

-G-

Gigan's roar echoed across the steaming ruins of Trost, his blood-churning call acting as a death siren to all the titans roaming the walled city, announcing to them all that their doom had arrived. The Titans lumbered about the city mindlessly, most of them approaching the wall that a group of humans was scaling up, however, most of them disappeared in a massive explosion that reduced them to scorched chunks of evaporating flesh, or in a beam of red-hot light wiping them off the face of the Earth, leaving scorch marks where they once stood.

A lone mother, trapped within her home, clutched her child tightly and sobbed softly as a titan peered in on them. The titan prepared to break through her roof and devour both of them, but their lives were saved when a large metal blade suddenly shot down from the sky, impaling the titan, as well as two others that were standing beside it. Her savior then took a moment to kick some rubble out of her front door, freeing her, before flying away to continue his titan massacre.

One titan found itself lost in an alleyway, surrounded by walls on all sides apart from the way it came. It was about to smash its way through the house it found itself in front of until a low hum noise caught its attention. It looked up to see Gigan using his O.R.C.A. to get the titan's attention. The noise of the O.R.C.A. was soon drowned out however by the loud rumble and buzz of his chainsaw hand as he reached down into the alley and slice the titan in two from the top of the head down.

Titans of all shapes and sizes approached the ruined HQ, attracted to it by the sound of the O.R.C.A. as Gigan hovered gracefully over the building, charging up his eye beam. Once he felt a sufficient amount of titans has arrived, he unleashed the beam upon all of them. Streets that were flooded with titans became completely empty

in an instant. As Gigan surveyed this scene, he felt a titan chewing on his tail claw. Gigan scowled at the titan, and in retaliation, he lifted his tail up to his toothy beak, and bit the titan's head off, before spitting it out onto the floor and chucking the body to the side.

And then the streets were silent.

Gigan took a deep breath as he sat on top of the wall in quiet contemplation. He then looked down upon the writhing pit of titans just outside of Trost, and his protective instincts and built-up bloodlust started to boil back to the surface. He started to charge up his eye beam with a sharp-toothed grin stretching across his metal beak, but he was stopped in his tracks when his A.I. companion Pelops appeared in his HUD, frantically shaking his head and waving his hands.

"NONONONONO! DO NOT DO THAT!" Pelops warned. "These titans are outside of human territory! If you kill them, Battra will-"

{Yeah, I know! I just... } Gigan groaned. {I can't stand this! Look at them! They're in the perfect spot for me to annihilate all of them with one missile, but I can't because if I do, all this time I spent fighting for humanity will go to waste.}

"Didn't killing all those titans satisfy your urges?"

{GOD NO! Because the titans were only in, to begin with, because I failed to protect this city!}

Pelops made a sad face while sitting down. "I'm sorry Gigan. If there were a better way, believe me, I'd let you know about it posthaste. I must admit, I'm also less than satisfied with the terms of this agreement."

{It's okay, Pelops. We'll figure something out.} Gigan turned away from the pit of titans and flew back to the city. **{I just hope Eren's doing okay.}**

-C-

Carla and Serizawa were sitting in a cafeteria refitted into a building to house escapees from Trost. After having lost yet another home, Carla was feeling a silent, creeping dread at the thought of having to find **yet another** new home to stay in. Serizawa meanwhile was annoyed because he left his supplies at the Jaeger household, preventing him from completing the prosthetic legs he was making for Carla. Just then, however, Serizawa felt a vibration in his pocket and excused himself. He went outside and hid behind a building before pulling out an old phone and placing it up to his ear, allowing him to hear Huang Meng's voice on the other end.

"Meng?" Daisuke asked.

"Doctor, where are you!?" Huang asked with a worried tone of voice.

" and I are near the gate with the other refugees. Why? What's wrong?"

"Grisha's kid is in trouble with some soldiers right now, so unless you want to lose our only other lead on his plans, I suggest you hurry! They have cannons aimed at him!"

Serizawa wasted no time. He hung up and ran back inside to get Carla, his frantic actions startling her as he grabbed her wheelchair and practically bulldozed the other refugees as he hurried out the door.

"S-Serizawa?! Where are we going?!" Carla asked nervously.

"I've just received word that your son is in danger!"

"WHAT!? WHY!?"

"I have no idea, but we need to move now!"

And with that, the two bolted towards Eren's location. Carla still had no idea what was happening, but knowing that her son was in

danger made her cling to her chair like her life depended on it.

-E-

"I will... protect... all of you."

Eren slowly opened his eyes and noticed Armin kneeling by his side, supporting him in his arms. He then looked up and saw Mikasa standing against an army of garrison soldiers, all of whom had their weapons drawn, while Sasha stood in front of Mikasa with her arms outstretched and a panicked look on her face. Eren was confused for a moment but quickly remembered that he had just recently discovered that he could transform into a titan. In his determination to protect his friends, he failed to account for the potential reactions of those who feared the titans.

"Eren!" Armin said in a worried tone, "I'm so glad you're okay! Please, tell them that this is all just some misunderstanding."

The four listened to the soldiers surrounding them as they quietly bickered amongst each other after hearing what Eren said.

"Protect all of you'? Does he mean us?" One of them asked.

"He must be talking about his titan buddies!" Another cried.

"But didn't the reports say he was fighting the titans?" A third interjected.

The tension among the soldiers was evident, as were the mixed emotions among the soldiers in this whole situation. Some of the soldiers believed that Eren was innocent, or even virtuous, while others were still doubtful of his intentions. Eren, as well as Sasha, thought he had made it clear that he wanted to help humanity, but were both shocked that his actions weren't enough to convince them of that. Trying to gather what little energy he had left after his fight with the giant spider, Eren tries to pick his words carefully so that he doesn't accidentally escalate things.

"EREN JAEGER!" Captain Kitz Woermann shouted, catching the attention of the four, "YOU AND YOUR ALLIES ARE CHARGED WITH TREASON AGAINST ALL OF HUMANKIND! THEREFORE, I SHALL ACT AS YOUR EXECUTIONER AND DECIDE YOUR FATE! SHOULD YOU TRY ANYTHING I DEEM SUSPICIOUS, I WILL ORDER IMMEDIATE CANNON FIRE ON YOUR POSITION!"

Eren wanted to say something in protest against these words but worried that it would affect him and his friends negatively, so he kept his mouth shut for the time being.

"NOW, ANSWER ME THIS BEFORE I BLOW YOU TO KINGDOM COME! ARE YOU A HUMAN OR A TITAN!?"

Eren had no choice but to answer honestly, hoping this would be enough.

"I'm a human with the power to transform into a Titan!" Eren shouted. "I am no threat to humanity, and I would never betray my own kind!"

"WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO CLARIFY, JAEGER!?"

"I know you all know what happened! You need me to say it out loud?!" Eren stared into Kitz's nervous eyes as he continued. "The titans are my enemy! Of that, there should be no doubt! Most of my comrades saw me fighting back against them in my Titan form and you know that I mean you all no harm! So please, let me show you how useful my ability is! I can communicate with Gigan, and he can help us with the war against the Titans if you just-"

"GIGAN!? YOU MEAN THE MASSIVE BEAST ROAMING TROST, SHOOTING STREAMS OF RED FLAMES AND FIRING CANNONS FROM HIS HANDS, CAUSING FURTHER DESTRUCTION TO TROST AS WE SPEAK!?"

Eren clammed up as he realized that Kitz was just like Jean. He was afraid of anything bigger and stronger than him, and he had no idea how he could reason with that at the moment.

"YOU TWO MAY NOT BE ON THE SIDE OF THE TITANS, BUT YOU'RE CERTAINLY NOT ALLIES OF HUMANITY! YOU'RE JUST WEAKENING OUR DEFENSES AND ACTING LIKE YOU'RE TRYING TO SAVE HUMANITY! A VERY DECEPTIVE MOVE ON YOUR BEHALF!"

"No, you're wrong! He-"

"ENOUGH! I'm tired of your excuses!" Kitz turned his attention away from Eren and towards the other cadets. "Trainee Ackerman! Trainee Arlert! Trainee Braus! This is your last chance to turn that traitor in and your actions will be forgiven!"

Mikasa raised her ODM blade. "Make me..."

Kitz hesitated upon seeing Mikasa's resolve. One of the Garrison soldiers then leaned in and reminded him that Mikasa was assigned to the elites fresh out of training and that losing her would be a massive blow to humanity. As Mikasa stood there, waiting for someone to make a move, Sasha got in front of her and held out her arms again.

"Mikasa, I know you love Eren and all, and I know you're REAAAALLY strong, but **please** reconsider this!" Sasha pleaded. "There's no way we're taking every one of these guys on, even with you on our side! And even if we somehow did, there's nowhere for us to go! Basically, what I'm trying to say is we're freaking dead if we fight them!"

"Sasha's right," Armin said. "This isn't the only way! They're just scared, and they don't understand what's happening! We need to just calm down and talk it out, not fight eachother like a bunch of mindless brutes!"

"THE TIME FOR TALK IS OVER!" Kitz interrupted, steeling his own resolve as he raised his own hand to give the signal to fire. However, he was stopped by another party entering the picture.

"STOP! DON'T HURT THEM!"

The quartet turned to the source of the plea and saw Daisuke and Carla arriving just before Kitz could give the order to fire. They stopped in front of the confused captain, and Carla grabbed onto Kitz's sleeve.

"Please sir, don't hurt them!" Carla begged, "I don't know what's happening, or why you see them as a threat, but surely we can talk this out."

Kitz removed Carla's hand from his sleeve. "I'm afraid it's too late for that, ma'am. Besides, who are you that you think you can intrude on this situation?"

"My name is Carla Jaeger. I'm Eren's mother."

Kitz's eyes widened. "His mother?" His wide-eyed stare turned into a dark scowl as he glared down at her. "I see. So the mother has come to claim her devil spawn?"

Serizawa and Carla recoiled at that comment. "W-what?" Carla questioned.

"Oh? You don't know? Your son is a traitor to all of humanity, conspiring against the safety of the walls and everyone in it."

"W-what?! N-no! My son... he would never-"

"DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, MOM!" Mikasa called. "EREN DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG!"

"Many of our soldiers have witnessed your son transform into a titan," Kitz continued. "Not only that, but he just admitted to having the ability to communicate with the monster known as Gigan."

Carla's mind was racing with questions, while Daisuke stood stock still as he realized what this meant. 'Grisha...' Serizawa thought. 'Was this your plan all along? To make Eren a titan shifter? Did you

not even consider what this would do to your family? How the people behind these walls would react? Oh, who am I kidding? Of course, you didn't, you bastard. After what you did to me, as well as the Atlas children, I'm convinced that you never cared about anyone but yourself and your own twisted, psychotic desire for revenge.'

Serizawa's thoughts were interrupted by Kitz violently grabbing Carla by the shoulders. "So tell me, witch," Kitz barked. "How is it that your son possesses that kind of power?! You're the one that brought that abomination into the world, were you the one that gave him his power as well?!"

"Let her go!" Serizawa shouted as he forcibly shoved Kitz off of Carla.

In response to the shove, Kitz grabbed Daisuke by the coat and threw him to the ground. The other soldiers weren't sure what to do with this situation as it went on, unsure whether to help their captain or the citizens. Even Rico Brzenska, one of the elite soldiers in Kitz's unit, who was completely on board with killing Eren, was hesitant to approve of Kitz's actions and tried to calm her captain down.

"S-sir, please, ease yourself," She suggested. "This is a bit too excessive."

"Excessive?!" Kitz snapped back, "this damn woman and her son must be dealt with before things get worse!"

"Ah-I understand, s-sir, but Eren Jaeger is the threat here, not his mother. For all we know, she may not be the reason for his power manifestation at all."

Eren clenched his fist as he watched Serizawa get assaulted and tried to make a run towards them, with Mikasa soon to follow him, and Armin and Sasha trying to get them to stop. Kitz noticed the trio approaching and finally gave the signal to fire the cannons. As the cannons prepared to fire, he grabbed a gun from one of his soldiers and aimed it at Carla's head. Rico tried to grab the gun away, only

for Kitz to shove her aside. At that moment, Eren's perception of time slowed to a crawl. With the cannonballs heading straight for them and his mother's life on the line, Eren had to choose who to protect and who to sacrifice, and the pressure drove him mad. Before he had to hastily pick between the two choices, however, Serizawa grabbed Kitz by the arm and shoulder, and twisted his wrist in such a way that forced him to release the gun, which in turn allowed Eren to focus on protecting the other three. Eren bit down into his hand and was suddenly surrounded by an electric aura.

All the soldiers were stunned as they watched half of a completed titan emerge from the resulting cloud of steam, holding out his hand to block the cannon fire. The titan glanced down at the soldiers with one eye, horrifying the soldiers in Kitz's unit. However, out of everyone in the crowd, Carla was the most shocked to see her son transform into that thing, unsure of how to react to this. She just stared at the half-formed body of a titan, completely speechless. Serizawa on the other hand wasn't all that surprised but was still disgusted that Grisha would do something like this to his own son.

Armin, Mikasa, and Sasha were all taken by surprise and were wondering what just happened, but quickly realized that Eren had defended them from the cannons. Eren soon emerged from the nape of his titan just like he did back in Trost, and dropped down to the ground with his friends. They looked up and saw the malformed titan slowly begin to evaporate, letting them all know that they had a limited amount of time to come up with a plan to escape.

"Okay guys, we have to get out of here before the smoke clears," Eren said, before looking through the thick cloud of steam. "It's hard to tell if they're watching and waiting, or just totally dazed, though I suppose it doesn't matter much now."

"Yeah, after seeing that, there's no way of reasoning with them now," Sasha said. "My guess is that they're probably getting ready to attack us again as we speak."

"So then it's settled: I'll turn into a titan again and get you all out of here."

"W-wait, Eren, I don't think that's a good idea," Armin pointed out.

"He's right," Mikasa agreed. "Your breathing is heavy, your skin is pale, your nose is bleeding... Eren, you're not well-"

"Who the hell cares about that?!" Eren interrupted. "We have more at stake right now than just my health! I need to get us all out of here and drop you off somewhere safe!"

"Drop us off?" Mikasa asked.

"I've caused too much trouble for all of you, especially mom. I think it's best if I just leave you all alone from now on."

"Eren, no. We promised mom to look after each other! There's no way I'm letting you go out on your own!"

"I won't be. I'll be with Gigan."

"Him? Why him?" Armin asked.

"As I was trying to say earlier, I can use my ability to talk to him to reach an understanding. We just have to find a way to prove to everyone that he's not a threat, and just wants to help out."

"Well, then let me come with you!" Mikasa insisted.

"No! This is something I have to do on my own!"

"No, it doesn't have to be!"

As Mikasa and Eren continued to argue, Sasha's attention was firmly placed on the top of the wall, where, through the slowly diminishing cloud of steam, she was able to see the cannon crew readying for a second volley. Suddenly she turned around and informed the three that the cannon crew was nearly finished reloading, prompting

Armin, Eren, and Mikasa to deduce that they would need to make their next move in an instant once the smoke clears, and prompting Mikasa to insist even harder that she comes with Eren. Armin then began to wonder why he wasn't doing anything to help, thinking back to all the times Eren and Mikasa saved him and how he was never able to repay them. However, in the next few moments, Armin heard Eren speak up.

"Hold on, there's one other idea that I had," he said as he looked over at his blonde friend. "Armin, I'm gonna need you for it."

Armin gasped softly.

"Now just hear me out. I'm aware of how unrealistic this plan sounds after what's happened. The best case scenario is that I try to use my Titan powers strategically under military direction. It may sound crazy, but if you think you can convince the Garrison that I mean no harm right here and now, then I trust you, and we'll go with whatever you have in mind."

The cannons were rolled back into position, and cranks turned as they were aimed back down at the four.

"We've got about fifteen seconds, guys!" Sasha called out. "Armin, whatever you decide, you better do it quickly!"

"We'll respect your opinion either way," Eren added. "But just know that if you don't think you can convince them, then my last resort is option one."

The rumble of the turning cranks stopped as the cannons clicked into place, the clicks followed up by a deafening silence.

"Eren... why would you leave such an important decision up to me?"

"Because you always keep a level head under pressure, and make the right choice. I'd say that's worth relying on."

"W-what? When have I ever done that?"

"Come on, you do it all the time," Eren said. "Just take five years ago for example. If you hadn't gone to, Mikasa and I wouldn't have been able to save my mom and get to the boat. We probably would have gotten eaten by the titans."

Armin gasped as his whole world came crashing down, and he was left completely speechless by what Eren said. They never thought of him as a burden? All this time, he thought that his friends saw him as dead weight, but in reality, they always saw him as an equal.

"Time's up!" Sahsa called. "Cannons are back up!"

"Well, Armin?"

Armin stood up just as the Titan body crumbled behind him. "Don't worry. Just leave it to me."

With that, Armin marched forwards, taking off his ODM gear, then stepped out of the cloud of steam and out into the open, his hands raised non-aggressively. Kitz ordered Armin to halt, and Armin stood in place, his hands still raised.

"IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE YOUR TRUE FORM MONSTER!?" Kitz shouted. "I DON'T BUY IT! I'LL GIVE THE SIGNAL TO FIRE! I MEAN IT!"

"EREN IS NOT A FOE OF HUMANITY!" Armin replied. "We're willing to co-operate and share everything we've learned about his powers!"

"YOUR PLEAS FALL ON DEAF EARS! HE REVEALED HIS TRUE FORM, AND BECAUSE OF THAT THREAT, HE CAN NOT LEAVE HERE ALIVE! IF YOU INSIST HE'S NOT A THREAT, THEN SHOW ME PROOF! OTHERWISE, WE'LL BLAST HIM BACK TO WHATEVER NIGHTMARE HE CRAWLED OUT OF!"

"YOU DON'T NEED ANY PROOF!" Armin screamed. "THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT **WE** PERCEIVE HIM TO BE!"

"W-WHAT!?"

"The reports say that hundreds of soldiers saw him, and those who were there say they saw him fighting the other titans! And that means they saw him getting swarmed by the Titans as well!"

The soldiers gasped as they realized what this meant.

"To put it plainly, the Titans saw Eren the same way they do any of us: as their prey! And it doesn't matter how else you may look at it, that is in irrefutable fact!"

The soldiers all lowered their weapons, all of them moved by Armin's point. All accept one...

"PREPARE TO ATTACK!" Kitz screamed. "DON'T LET YOURSELVES BE SWAYED BY HIS CUNNING LIES! THE TITANS' BEHAVIOR HAS ALWAYS BEEN BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION! I WOULDN'T PUT IT PAST THEM TO ASSUME HUMAN FORM!"

Kitz kept blathering on and on, trying to throw out any other explanation that can justify him eliminating Eren, before finally screaming, "I REFUSE TO LET THEM CONTINUE THIS BEHAVIOR UNCHECKED!"

The soldiers raised their weapons back up, but didn't seem as willing to attack as they were before. Armin looked back at his friends nervously. He saw the three of them smile at him, still having faith that he would be able to save them. Armin clenched his fists before turning back to Kitz and placing his fist over his heart, with the other folded behind his back.

"I AM A SOLDIER! I HAVE DEDICATED MY HEART TO THE RESTORATION OF HUMANITY! NOTHING WOULD MAKE ME PROUDER THAN TO DIE FOR SUCH A NOBLE CAUSE! IF WE WERE TO USE EREN'S TITAN ABILITY, AND ABILITY TO SPEAK TO GIGAN, AND COMBINE IT WITH THE MANPOWER WE HAVE LEFT, I BELIEVE WE CAN RETAKE THIS CITY! FOR HUMANITY'S GLORY, IN WHAT LITTLE TIME I HAVE LEFT, **I WILL ADVOCATE HIS STRATEGIC VALUE!** "

A soldier leaned in and whispered in Kitz's ear, only for him to be told off by Kitz. He then raised his arm up to try and signal for the cannons to fire. Carla covered her mouth in terror while Serizawa struggled to get up off the ground while being held down by two soldiers. Eren slowly raised his hand up to his mouth, about to bite his hand, when suddenly, they heard the sound of ODM gear just above them, and heard a deep, firm, powerful voice echo across the town.

"STAND DOWN!"

"Ah-" Kitz shuddered and lowered his arm in surprise. "C-Commander Erwin?!"

Erwin Smith landed down from the walls, accompanied by his second in command, Levi Ackerman, and section commander Hange Zoe, who had all arrived just in the nick of time.

"Someone wanna tell us what the hell is going on?" Levi asked.

"I too would like to know that, captain," Dot Pixis said as he too arrived on the scene.

"C-Commander P-P-Pixis?!" Kitz stuttered, sweat trickling down his face.

"What's this we've been hearing about a titan in human form?" Levi asked.

"Human who can turn into a titan!" Sasha corrected.

"Captain Woerman, gather our reinforcements," Pixis ordered. "I think we could at least do these young soldiers the favor of hearing them out."

Eren, Mikasa, Armin, Sasha, Carla, and Serizawa, all collectively gave a sigh of relief.

-L-

Several minutes ago...

The Scouts had returned from their most recent expedition late into the evening, riding on horseback all the way back through Trost. Word had not gotten to them about the situation in wall Rose yet, so when they arrived to find a pit full of writhing titans all piled up on top of one another, with a massive hole in the wall where the gate used to be, everyone was stunned and confused, wondering how on Earth this could happen. While questioning this, they heard an ear-splitting, mechanical screech, followed by an explosion that launched a titan over the wall, its limbless body spraying blood everywhere as it soared through the sky before finding itself impaled on a tree far off in the distance.

"The hell?!" Captain Levi blurted out upon witnessing this.

Suddenly, Gigan stood up at his full height, towering over the walls and revealing himself to the Scouts. Many of them jumped in terror upon seeing him, as he leaned down and unleashed his eye beam upon a crowd of Titans. Section commander Hange squealed with excitement upon seeing him, and immediately grappled towards the wall and launched herself up it. Her squad members followed her, trying to get her to calm down and return to the group while Levi looked up at Erwin.

"Orders, sir?" Levi asked.

Erwin looked down at the pit. "We won't be able to get our supply carts through here. Until we receive assistance so that we can get past this obstacle, we'll have to set up camp for the time being," Erwin then turned to Levi. "I need you to go join Hange, so the three of us can travel over the wall and towards the interior. I will be with you two shortly after I brief the scouts on the current plan."

Levi nodded in understanding and then scaled up the wall while Erwin announced the plan to the Scouts.

Meanwhile, Moblit and Nifa were standing just behind Hange. The two were sweating buckets as they watched her intentionally get the attention of Gigan.

"HEY, BIG GUY!" Hange screamed. "OVER HERE!"

Gigan looked up from the titan he was dissecting and flung it off of his bloody chainsaw hand before walking over to Hange and the other scouts. His tail swayed with each step, but never so much as grazed a single building as he approached. Gigan towered over the wall, standing at over double its height, but crouched down before Hange and smiled at her while waving at her, which left her astonished and going absolutely ballistic with excitement.

"Haaa~ DID YOU SEE THAT MOBLIT!? HE JUST WAVED AT ME! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS!?" Moblit didn't get a chance to speak before Hange answered her own question. "It means he's able to communicate with us on some level!" Hange squeed while hopping up and down like a schoolgirl.

"Section commander, please, calm down," Moblit begged.

Hange took a deep breath and then cleared her throat before looking up at Gigan again. "HELLO!" She called, speaking loudly and slowly so Gigan could hear her. "MY NAME IS HANGE!"

Gigan waved again and chirped to greet her, which made Hange even more excited. Hange was just about to ask if she could touch

Gigan when Levi landed next to her.

"Ah, Levi! Just in time!"

"For what?" He asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Only one of the greatest scientific discoveries we've had in years! You see, it would appear that Gigan here is able to understand our language, and even copy our gestures."

Levi's face was as stoic as always, but Hange could tell he didn't believe her.

"Okay, clearly you need proof. Watch this," she then looked up at Gigan. "OKAY, IF YOU CAN UNDERSTAND US, NOD ONCE!"

Gigan gave a firm and deliberate nod in response. Levi's eyes widened ever so slightly.

"Incredible isn't it?!"

Levi nodded slightly. "Yeah, it's pretty impressive I guess."

"IMPRESSIVE!? Revolutionary is more like it! This is probably the first animal in history to ever understand human speech on such a deep level!"

"You mean aside from the abnormal in our group?"

Hange looked around, wondering what Levi was talking about, before remembering the jab he made at her that morning and frowning. "Don't get my hopes up like that. That's rude."

Suddenly, Erwin landed on the wall as well. After being caught up on everything, Erwin looked up at Gigan, fascinated by him. After fully processing the fact that this mysterious creature could understand human speech, he found himself taking quite an interest in this mysterious beast. However, as they watched Hange attempt to test the limits of his understanding, they heard the sound of cannon fire

in the distance, immediately followed by a massive flash of lightning from the other side of the wall. Levi, Erwin, and Hange immediately went to investigate, leaving Gigan to his own devices.

The three eventually arrived to see the Garrison aiming their weapons at a young man holding his hands up while trying to convince them not to attack. They overheard him saying that his friend, "Eren" had some sort of ability that allowed him to turn into a titan, and furthermore, that he was able to communicate with Gigan, presumably meaning that he could understand what Gigan was saying. Both of these facts piqued the interest of the Scouts, so when Kitz prepared to order that the cannons open fire upon the four, Erwin knew he had to intervene.

"STAND DOWN!" Erwin shouted, and just like that, everyone stopped in their tracks.

-E-

Eren and his friends stood by Commanders Erwin Smith and Dot Pixis of the Survey Corps and Garrison Regiment respectively as they observed Gigan in the distance, leading the Scouts through the breach after burying the pit.

"I must say, the titans are one thing, but that Gigan is something else entirely," Pixis said.

"Indeed," Erwin replied. He then turned to Eren and addressed him directly. "So, is it true that you and Gigan are able to communicate directly?"

"Yes sir," Eren said.

"Could you demonstrate this ability to us?"

Eren nodded, then approached the edge of the wall before calling out to Gigan, who turned around and roared in return, with Eren able to understand him perfectly.

{Eren! Good to see you again! What was going on back there? I heard you transform into a titan.}

"Let's just say that things almost went really bad for us," Eren replied. "But ultimately, everything worked out, and I managed to convince them to let you help us. Just so long as you don't cause too much collateral damage."

Gigan tilted his head in confusion. **{Ooookay? I wasn't really causing any, to begin with, unless burn marks count. The city was already pretty beaten up by the time I got here.}** Gigan then shrugged. **{But alright, I'll play ball. In fact, I'll even do you one better!}**

Eren's eyes widened. "Better?"

{Yeah! I can help you guys repair the place!} Gigan then swapped his chainsaw hand out for a nano-metal spray nozzle. **{I can just use my nano metal to repair the wall!}**

Eren gasped in shock at this. "Y-you mean it?"

{Sure! At least, I think so... } He then looked away from the humans. **{Hey Pelops, can I do that?}**

"Indeed we can," he replied. "Your Nano-Metal version 2.7.3 may not be as versatile as MechaGodzilla's Nano-Metal version 3.1.1, but it should have the blueprints in place needed to re-create the gate."

{Nice! Could you give me a schematic?}

"Certainly! Just give me one moment." Pelops then disappeared as a loading bar appeared in Gigan's HUD. Two seconds later, the loading bar had finished. Pelops then reappeared and presented the schematics to Gigan. *"TADA! Presenting to you, the Anti-Colossal Titan Trost Gate (or ACTTG for short)! This gate is made using hardened Nano-Metal, making it almost as durable as these walls,*

while also being far more resistant to shattering thanks to its metallic consistency, allowing it to bend instead of crack!"

{Impressive! But how is it specifically Anti-Colossal Titan?}

" I'm glad you asked, Gigan!" Pelops then switched to another slide, which showed a quick animation of the Colossal Titan's foot slamming into the door, and metal spikes suddenly emerging from it. "Should the Colossal Titan attempt to kick this gate in, sensors lining the door will detect the attack, and the gate's surface will deform into dozens of ultra hardened spikes that will skewer the Colossal Titan's leg in an instant, and inject liquid Nano-Metal into it! Not only will this hurt like a mother, but it will also prevent the Colossal titan from escaping, and allow the defenders of the wall to strike at it!"

{And how will the humans be able to get in and out?}

Pelops switched to another slide in response to this question, showing a simple lever. *"This lever will be situated on the inside of the wall. It will require at least three people to pull it due to the size and weight."* He then switched to another gif showing the two halves of the gate splitting apart and shrinking away from each other. *"Once the lever is pulled, the upper and lower halves of the wall will split apart and slide away from each other. To close the gate, all you need to do is pull the lever back up."*

{Heh. Nice work, Pelops.}

Gigan then looked back and noticed Eren standing there, awkwardly rubbing the back of his head. "Soooo... is that a yes?"

{Hugh? Oh, right! Sorry, I assumed you could hear Pelops too.}

"Hear who?"

{Pelops. He's an artificial intelligence that helps me out with stuff.}

For the time being, Eren decided not to ask what "artificial intelligence" was. He figured that he would probably get an opportunity to ask all the questions he wanted soon enough. For now, he simply asked that Gigan help fix the city. Gigan nodded and began by filling the hole in the wall with the new gate. He sprayed out just a little bit of nano metal, and then the soldiers up on the wall, as well as the Scouts still on the ground watched in awe as a new gate suddenly began forming. The gate had a shiny, silver color with green and red lights adorning it. On the ground next to it was a massive, three-person lever, and on the outside were a set of danger sensors that scanned the area.

"Well, I'll be," Pixis said. "That creature is quite the miracle worker."

Erwin agreed, greatly impressed by Gigan's work. Sasha's jaw nearly fell to the floor as she stood there, unable to comprehend what just happened until Mikasa snapped her out of it by literally snapping in her face. Gigan turned back to the soldiers and smiled at them. Eren, after taking a moment to take this in, smiled back and gave Gigan a thumbs up.

-C-

After the whole ordeal with the Garrison, Carla and Serizawa was sitting by a lake in Sina, reflecting on these recent revelations. As they thought over all that had happened over the course of one long, chaotic day, Carla reached into her shirt and pulled out the key that Eren had on him the night that Grisha disappeared. She clenched her fist tightly around it as tears welled up in her eyes.

'Why?' She thought to herself. 'Why did this happen? Did you do this, Grisha?! Is that why you left that night?! Were you just too afraid of the consequences?'

Serizawa noticed Carla beginning to cry and placed a hand on her's. "Hey, are you okay? What's wrong, Carla?"

Carla sighed softly and put the key back beneath her shirt, before taking Serizawa's hand into hers. "Serizawa... do you remember what you told me the other night? About your fiance?"

"Yes," he nodded. "Why bring her up?"

"Well, did you trust her enough to tell her your secrets?"

"Well of course I did. I believe that anyone should be able to entrust even their darkest secrets with their loved ones, and I knew for a fact that she would never betray that trust."

Carla sighed softly. "I wish my husband was like that. I have a feeling that he's somehow connected to Eren turning into a Titan, and I don't know why he never told me anything about it. Do you think it's just because he doesn't trust me?"

"I wouldn't say that," Daisuke replied. "Grisha probably kept secrets from you just because he thought it was for the best that you didn't know. Hell, despite my personal beliefs, even I was hesitant to share my secrets with my fiance. I only really did so because she of all people deserved to know."

"So you're saying he did it to protect me, and our son?" Carla said in a cold, monotone voice before sighing. "I can't believe I'm saying this, but that only makes it worse. Sure, Eren may be using his power to protect humanity, but there's no guarantee that everyone will accept him for what he is even if he's using his power for a noble cause. I just can't imagine what was going through Grisha's mind that made him do this to his own son."

Carla sniffled softly as a tear rolled down her cheek. "And the worst part is that there's nothing I can do but wait. Just like always..."

Serizawa squeezed Carla's hand gently, as he felt sorry for her. At the same time, however, he also felt anger towards Grisha, as he knew for a fact that Grisha must have done something to Eren that gave him the power of a titan shifter. Seeing the woman he had

grown to call a friend in such emotional distress due to Grisha's actions only made him more determined to make Grisha pay for what he had done, not just in the past, but seemingly continues to do to this very day. He gritted his teeth as he remembered all the horrible things that he had done, and all the terrible things that had resulted from his actions. However, he calmed himself as he heard Carla weeping, and he pulled her in close, wiping away her tears and cradling her in his arms.

The Trial

-C-

A day had passed since the incident in the Trost district, and many events had already transpired as a result of the whole ordeal. For one, during the Garrison, Survey Corps, and Cadet Corps' joint effort to rebuild the Trost district, Hange Zoe and her team captured an abnormal titan that managed to survive Eren, Kumonga, and Gigan's attacks, and she decided to name him "Gigan Junior," as a loving homage to the cyborg giant. Another development involved the new gate that Gigan had created. The Survey Corps attempted to break off a piece of it so that they could study it, however, the Church of the Walls prevented them from doing so, treating the new gate as a gift from the gods. Not that it mattered, since on the one occasion where they were able to attempt to get a sample, they ended up breaking all their tools while leaving the gate unscathed.

However, one of the people affected the most by the incident was Eren, who was locked up in a jail cell by the Military Police due to the discovery that he was a titan shifter. However, the fact that he was imprisoned didn't hurt Eren quite as much as what it implied, which was that even after all he and Gigan had done for humanity, the people still didn't believe that they were allies of humanity. As he was being held in captivity, the public was made well aware of his existence, and the knowledge of him began to spur new hope in the populous. And with that hope came rebellious thoughts among the people. Because of this, a trial was being prepared to determine the fate of Eren Jaeger, whether he live in the hands of the Scouts, or die in the hands of the MPs.

While the trial was being prepared, commander Erwin Smith and his second in command, Levi Ackerman, decided to investigate Eren's family to see if they could acquire any information regarding Eren Jaeger. They eventually arrived at her house in Trost, which she had settled back into as soon as it was deemed safe for people in her

area to return. Erwin gave the door a firm and sharp knock, and the two men waited until they heard the click of the door unlocking before Daisuke Serizawa peeked out to see who it was.

", I presume?" Erwin asked, assumingly.

Serizawa promptly corrected Erwin. "I'm afraid you're mistaken, sir. I'm just the caretaker for Carla Jaeger. My name is Daisuke Serizawa."

"Ah, my apologies."

"It's quite alright. By the way, aren't you the men who saved Carla's son and his friends? Commander Erwin and Captain Levi, I believe it was?"

"Indeed we are," Erwin replied in confirmation. "It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Now, if you don't mind, we'd like to speak to concerning the position her son is currently in."

"Ah, I see. I'll go get her," Daisuke then shut the door and went to Carla's room, where he found her resting on her bed.

"Who was at the door, Serizawa?" Carla asked, not looking up from her book.

"It was two of the soldiers who saved your son," Serizawa replied. "Levi and Erwin. They wish to speak with you about Eren."

"Oh, well, let them in," Carla replied.

Serizawa nodded and returned to the front door, where he allowed Erwin and Levi to come inside, before escorting them to Carla's room. Upon entering, Erwin pulled up a chair and sat by Carla's bed, Levi leaned against a wall, and Serizawa stood on the opposite side of the bed as Erwin.

"Thank you for your time,,," Erwin said.

"Well, it's the least I could do for the men who saved my son from being blasted to oblivion," she replied. "I must admit, I am a bit hesitant to speak with anyone from the military about my son, but I'm willing to hear you two out."

"In that case, I'd like to begin by letting you know that before we talk to your son, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your life."

"Really? Nothing else?"

Erwin nodded, "Nothing else. I believe that knowing more about your past could give us some insight into how your son managed to obtain this power."

Carla nodded and began answering all of his questions, believing they wouldn't provide anything in the way of useful information. Most of Erwin's questions revolved around Grisha, as from what he knew about Grisha from what Keith had told him in the past, he seemed like a suspicious character, being a man that just suddenly appeared outside the walls, and so he had a suspicion that Grisha had something to do with these powers manifesting in Eren. However, the questioning led to some rather disappointing results, as all the information Carla could describe a relatively normal marriage, with nothing seeming out of the ordinary. Still, Erwin remained cordial despite the disappointing lack of information Carla could provide.

"I see. Well, that's about everything we have to ask of you,," Erwin said with a slight sigh. "Thank you for answering our questions."

Erwin stood up, about to leave with Levi, but before they left, Carla stopped them.

"Before you go, I think there's one more thing I would like to discuss with you," she said.

Erwin sat back down and Levi took a position against the wall once again. Carla then reached into her shirt.

"The night that my husband disappeared, he gave this to my son," she pulled out a brass-colored key attached to a string that was wrapped around her neck. "I thought it was meaningless at the time, but now... I think it might be more valuable than I thought. This key leads to the basement of our house in Shinganshina. My son had it on him that night, but I took it from him so I could keep it as a memoir of my husband. But with everything that's happened to my son, I suspect that whatever Grisha has done, the answers can be found in that basement."

"Have you ever been down there?" Erwin asked.

"No. He told me it was his private office, and I assumed that was just where he kept his medical supplies, documents of his patients, etcetera. Though, he did say he would show it to Eren one day."

"Interesting... is your son aware that you had that key in your possession?"

Carla shook her head in response, explaining that he had it wrapped around his neck while he was asleep when he was found, and figured that Grisha probably put it on him while he was asleep.

"I see. Well, I believe that now it falls onto you to decide when Eren is ready to receive this key." Carla was confused by this comment, but Erwin continued. "If your husband intended to show your son the basement 'someday' without specifying, I believe that day would be when your son learns of his powers. Until that day was to come, he entrusted you to hold onto that key for safekeeping so you could give it to your son when he was ready. Whatever was in that basement, Grisha must have only wanted your son to see what was inside if he was this secretive about it."

"What could possibly be that important?"

"That's something we'll have to find out. Hopefully, your son can lead us there."

Carla sighed softly and put the key away. "You know,, I'm putting a lot of faith in you. Eren has always wanted to join the Scouts, and I want to be sure no harm will come his way. If he is able to join you in your expeditions... please keep a careful eye on him."

"Don't worry. Your son is a valuable asset to humanity right now, and I'll do everything in my power to protect him at all costs."

"Thank you..."

Erwin nodded and stood up once more, then left the house with Levi. Serizawa meanwhile went over to his room and gathered some tools so he could take Carla's measurements for her prosthetics. When he came back, he found her staring up at the ceiling, so he set his equipment down so he could talk with her.

"Carla? Is something bothering you?" He asked.

"I'm just worried about Eren," she replied. "I don't know what's going to happen to him, and that terrifies me, made even worse by the fact that no one is explaining anything."

"Maybe we should try asking Armin and Mikasa?"

"They're helping with the reconstruction right now. I don't want to bother them while they're working."

"I'm sure they'd be willing to take some time off to see you. Besides, you deserve to know what's happening to your son."

"... Okay. We'll go tomorrow, though. I need to rest for a bit."

After Serizawa took her measurements, Carla slowly closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep, while Serizawa went right back to work.

-M-

The next day, the cadets sat in the mess hall on their break, most of them taking the time to kick back and enjoy their break time.

However, Mikasa and Armin couldn't stop thinking about Eren's fate, Mikasa especially. Despite doing everything she could to protect Eren to the best of her ability, she felt as though it was all for naught. Sasha, who was sitting at the table with Mikasa as per usual, looked down at her meal, which consisted of a steamed potato, a grilled piece of beef, and a quarter of a loaf of bread. Sasha picked up her uneaten potato and broke it in two, with one piece dwarfing the other at nearly two-thirds the mass of the original potato. She sighed softly before handing the larger piece to Mikasa, catching her attention.

"Here, Mikasa, have half," She said.

Mikasa looked down at it and then back over at Sasha.

"W-wha... why?" She asked. Sasha simply smiled at her in response. Mikasa slowly reached out and took it, then took a bite of it.

"Thank you..." Mikasa muttered. She then placed a hand on her cheek when she felt it growing warmer.

After the three finished their meals, Mikasa and Armin were called outside by a Garrison soldier, who let them know that they had visitors. The two left the mess hall and found Carla and Serizawa waiting for them by the military checkpoint. The two immediately ran up to her and hugged her tightly.

"Mom!" Mikasa cried, "I'm so happy to see you again!"

"I'm happy to see you too," Carla said softly with a weak smile. Her tone was enough to tip the two of them off that something was wrong.

"Mom, is something wrong?" Mikasa asked.

"She just wishes to talk to you two about Eren," Serizawa answered.

"I really didn't want to bother either of you," She added. "But if you know something about what's going to happen to him, then I would-"

"He's going to be held on trial," Mikasa said without hesitation with a dark look in her eyes. "We were told this morning that the MPs will be working to take Eren into custody, and the Survey Corps will be defending his case."

"M-mikasa!" Armin shouted as he placed his hands on her shoulders frantically, "I don't think we're allowed to spread that information out to the public!"

"She deserves to know, Armin. Orders be damned," Mikasa argued before turning back to Carla, "Mom, I don't know whether you'll be able to participate in the trial or not, but Eren needs you. I know you'll be able to save him from execution."

Carla paused for a moment to register all this before replying. "I-I'll try, but I'm not sure I can, Mikasa. Even as his mother, I suspect that the Military won't care much about my relation to him, other than seeing me as the witch who birthed a titan..."

Mikasa and Armin were reminded of how Kitz had threatened and harassed Carla. Serizawa noticed this too, but he knew that something else was bothering her, as he remembered that she believed Grisha was connected to Eren's ability to transform into a titan and wondered if that thought was also taking a toll on her psyche. Eventually, a garrison soldier approached Mikasa and Armin, telling them to get back to work, and the two parted ways with Serizawa and Carla. As they left, Carla clutched the armrests on her wheelchair, now filled with a sense of anxiety and dread from the coming trial.

-E-

"Dad? Are you okay?" Eren asked as he climbed up a hill with his father, who bore a distraught look on his face.

"I wish I was, Eren..." Grisha replied. "But I hope that after doing this, humanity will be."

"D-dad, what are you talking about?"

Grisha took a knee in front of Eren, avoiding his question as he looked into his son's eyes. He ruffled the top of Eren's head as his eyes filled with tears. "Eren... whatever happens... promise me you will protect everyone..."

Eren slowly opened his eyes, finding himself in the same jail cell he had fallen asleep in. However, this time, when he woke up and looked around, he saw four people standing behind the bars. After he fully came to, he realized that those people were Carla, Serizawa, Erwin, and Levi.

"H-he's awake!" Carla pointed to Eren while tearing up. "He's finally awake!"

"M-mom? What are you doing here?" Eren asked as he sat up on his bed. He then looked over at Erwin and Levi and became even more confused by the situation.

"Don't worry yourself, Eren," Erwin said. "We're here to support your case in an upcoming trial that will determine your fate."

"In other words, we're here to save your ass from the Military Police," Levi explained.

"Save me? What do you mean?" Eren asked them.

"The trial will be to determine what will happen to you now that the people of the walls know your identity," Erwin continued. "Darius Zackly, the general of all three military branches, will resolve your case by deciding to either hand custody over you to us, or to the Military Police. However, we were given the chance to speak to you in hopes that you could provide some information that you believe could help us support your case."

"If it isn't too much trouble, commander, could Serizawa and I perhaps have a seat in the court?" Carla asked.

"Of course. I'll have you both join our side as witnesses. That way, you will both have a say in the case. It is vital that the court see your side of the story, and have some insight on your husband's possible involvement."

"Dad? What does he have to do with this?" Eren asked, looking at Carla.

She and Eren shared a glance before Carla pulled out the basement key, and displayed it in front of Eren. "I found this around your neck on the night your father left. I have a feeling that your father might be the reason you can turn into a titan, but I want to know if you remember anything from it."

Eren squinted at the key for a moment before his eyes widened. "W-wait, I do remember something! It's... a bit difficult to remember, but he said that I need to get to the cellar and that whatever was down there would be the key to saving humanity!"

"Saving humanity from what?" Levi asked.

"I..." Eren clenched his fist in frustration. "I don't remember."

"Well, that's helpful."

"It's fine if you can't recall anything else, Eren. We just need to make sure that you at least have the right intentions," Erwin said.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Carla asked in an upset tone.

Erwin glanced at her briefly before looking back at Eren, "Whatever reason you have for using your powers is beyond my knowledge, so I would like for you to tell us right now: what is it that you want to do in life?"

Eren's mind was a flurry of thoughts as he tried to come up with exactly what he wanted to say. It's a simple question, but one that he found himself struggling to answer, as not once did he ever think about what he would say if asked.

"Hurry up and answer already. It can't be that damn difficult," Levi said.

Eren looked up and answered, finally deciding on what he wanted to say. "I want to join the Survey Corps because I want my mother to live the best life she can live... even if I have to kill all the titans to ensure her safety, I'll do it. I'd give my life so that she can live the rest of hers in peace."

Eren's answer warmed his mother's heart. She placed a hand over her chest as tears welled up in her eyes. Serizawa and Erwin were quite impressed by Eren's response, and they knew deep down that he had a good heart. Levi meanwhile was more just surprised than moved by his devotion to Carla. He thought back to his own mother, Kuchel Ackerman, but his memory of her was quite hazy. He remembered how much she cared for him in his youth, how much her death tore him apart, and how he waited weeks until Kenny came and raised him, but he couldn't say he had any actual memories **with**, or even really **of** her, but more just general feelings he had about her. Seeing Eren's devotion to his own mother made him wonder if he would have cared for his mother as much as Eren does for Carla had she not been taken by her illness.

"The kid's alright," Levi said. "I can tell his intentions are at least somewhat pure. I'll look out for him if he joins our group, and if I need to, y'know," Levi makes a tearing noise with his mouth while dragging a finger along his neck. "If he thinks about going on a rampage."

The rest of the meeting was spent with Eren and Carla talking to each other until it was time for them to leave. Despite getting little information from Eren, the two scouts believed that they had enough to support their case.

Sometime later...

The day of the trial soon arrived, and both military groups took position within the courtroom where the trial was held. Carla sat beside Mikasa, Armin, Sasha, and Rico Brazinska. She and Rico shared an awkward glance before wordlessly agreeing to not speak to each other unless absolutely necessary. Serizawa sat right next to Carla, while Erwin and Levi stood to their left. On the other side of the courtroom were the Military Police, including their commander, one Nile Dock, as well as Dimo Reeves, and a member of the Church of the Walls, Minister Nick. Eren was escorted into the room by Hange and Mike, then knelt in the center of the court as a metal pole slid between his arms, his handcuffs preventing him from moving away or even standing up.

General Darius Zackly took a seat at the judge's desk and cleared his throat, then began to speak, "Alright, let's begin this trial. Eren Jaeger, as a soldier, you have sworn to give up your life for the good of humanity. Is that correct?"

"Yes sir," Eren replied.

"As an enlisted soldier during a time of war, military doctrine requires that your trial be held as a court-martial, and as commander of armed forces, this matter is left to my discretion. Thus I will decide whether you live or die."

Sweat trickled down the back of Eren's neck, and he gulped a bit of saliva.

"Any objections?"

"N-no, sir."

"Your astuteness is appreciated. Now, let us proceed. As we had anticipated, covering up your identity has proven fruitless, and lest we disclose your existence one way or the other, we risk the outbreak of widespread civil unrest. A choice must be made, and the

regiment that takes custody of you, the Military Police, or the Scout regiment, will determine your fate. To begin, the military police will now present their case."

Nile Dock stepped forwards. "Thank you, your honor! My name is Nile Dock, I am the commander of the Military Police, and I hereby present our proposal! Following a thorough examination of his physiology, subject Eren Jaeger should be disposed of immediately! We acknowledge that he has played a major role in stopping the latest titan incursion, however his presence within the Walls as we speak is only creating suspicion against the monarchy. For the greater good, after we have gathered all information we can on him, we would see him made a fallen warrior."

"And now, the Scouts."

Erwin stepped forwards. "My name is Erwin Smith. As the commander of the Scout regiment, I propose the following: reinstate Eren as a full member of the Scouts, and we will utilize his titan abilities, and ability to communicate with Gigan to retake wall Maria. That is all."

"Gigan? The giant creature made out of metal? How does he relate to Eren Jaeger?"

Pastor Nick slams his hands on a table, interrupting proceedings. "It obviously doesn't!" He shouted. "The Black Angel is the mighty blade of the gods, and would never fraternize with that abomination!"

'The black angel?' Armin thought. 'Where have I heard that name before?'

After Nile calmed Nick down, Darius spoke up. "Let's get back on track. We're specifically talking about Eren's case. We'll worry about Gigan later. Now, Eren, do you have any difficulty controlling your ability?"

"No sir," Eren replied with a bit more confidence in his voice. "Each time I used my power, I was able to retain full control."

"I see." Darius turned the page. "The report states that you were speaking to Gigan immediately prior to him patching the Trost gate. While Gigan was shown to be capable of understanding human speech, you seem to have been holding a full conversation with him. Would you care to explain this?"

"My powers allow me to understand what Gigan is saying, so he and I are able to communicate."

"I-Impossible!" Pastor Nick shouted. "The Black Angel, the blade of the gods, would never speak with a creature like you! He is our savior, and you are an abomination!"

Carla clenched her fists and snarled softly as Nick continued to yell at her son, soon to be joined by some members of the MP. Eventually, Darius slammed his hand on the desk like a gavel.

"Order in the court!" He shouted, silencing the crowd. "Now, I would like to give the witnesses the stand."

After a bit of deliberation between Mikasa, Carla, and Armin, Carla decided she would go first.

"Your honor," she said. "As the mother of Eren Jaeger, I must hold myself responsible for any actions that he has taken. However, I argue that my son has done nothing other than proving his usefulness to humanity."

"Usefulness?!" Nick interrupted. "He has brought fear among the innocent, and defiled the sanctity of the Walls with his very presence!" He then pointed at Carla. "And you! You are the vermin that birthed him! How is it possible for a parasite like you to have evaded the eyes of God and infect the gift he has bestowed upon us?!"

Carla grew uncomfortable hearing his venomous words, but continued regardless, "I was born and raised within these very walls, just like my son. Never in my life would I have expected for his path in life to lead here, only for him to be insulted and discriminated against by his own people."

"His people?! How dare yo-"

"Pastor Nicolas!" Darius raised his voice over Nick's. "One more interjection out of you, and I will have you removed from this courtroom!"

Nick scoffed but chose to keep quiet. Carla felt relieved that she didn't have to hear what Nick was about to say next. She glanced down and saw Eren's boiling anger subside, before looking up at Darius and continuing her testimony.

"Your honor, I believe I do know the truth behind my son's power, however, I can't be certain of it at the moment."

"Proceed."

"I... I believe... that it was my husband, Grisha Jaeger, who is responsible for giving my son this power."

The entire room, barring Serizawa, Erwin, and Levi, were all shocked by her words and began muttering amongst themselves, while Darius had a very curious look on his face. Eren, on the other hand, was unsure if his mother was telling the truth, or if she was just making it up to protect him. However, after recalling the memory that he recalled when he was shown the key, he began to come to a similar conclusion in his head.

"Could you please clarify your statement?" Darius asked.

"Two days after Shinganshina fell, my husband took Eren away, but never returned, and Eren was apparently found out in the woods somewhere. Eren struggles to recall what happened that night, and I

have my suspicions that my husband has done something to his memory, possibly in order to cover his tracks."

"Is that all the evidence you have?" Darius asked.

"I... ah-"

", I must inform you that if you are unable to provide concrete evidence of your claim, I will have to conclude your say in this case."

"Y-your honor, I-"

"That's enough out of you, witch!" Nick cried. "You've had your chance to speak, and you have done nothing to persuade any of us that you and your son are nothing but monsters!" The crowd on the opposing side muttered in begrudging agreement. "You're only delaying the inevitable! You and your son are a threat to the sanctity of the walls, and must be-"

"SHUT THE HELL UP!" Eren screamed as he slammed the chain of his handcuffs against the steel pole, startling the entire jury. "YOU DON'T GET TO SPEAK TO MY MOTHER THAT WAY, YOU SON OF A BITCH!"

Carla began to worry that Eren would ruin the trial if he continued like this, and wracked her brain trying to come up with some way to stop him. She knew that in order to do this, she would have to do something drastic. She tugged on Serizawa's sleeve and whispered in his ear.

"You're an idiot... You're all idiots, willing to throw away the only chance we have at victory! JUST SHUT UP, AND PUT ALL YOUR STUPID FAITH IN M-"

SMACK! The sound of a loud slap reverberated throughout the building. Eren recoiled from the hit, then turned to see his mother and Serizawa in front of him. Everyone was shocked by this act, Levi especially, as he had his own plan to save Eren. Carla proceeded to

wrap her arms around Eren, slipping out of her wheelchair in the process. The hug lasted for about a minute, before she finally let go and looked him in the eyes, her hands gripping his shoulders tightly.

"Eren, I'm grateful that you want to defend me... but I should be the one who defends you this time."

Darius leaned forward and rested his chin in his folded hands as she continued. "No matter who you get sent to, this may be the last time we'll get to see each other, so I have to tell you this now," She wiped her tearful eyes on her sleeve before continuing. "I love you so much, but I can't be there for you anymore once the trial is over. So don't just try to make a peaceful life for me, but for yourself as well."

Eren was left speechless by what his mother had just said. She then turned around and looked up at Darius. "Your honor, I don't believe my words prove to be valuable in this case, but I highly suggest that you turn him over to the Survey Corps."

"But what if your son went rogue?"

"I believe I can answer that, sir," Erwin interjected. "We are able to control Eren Jaeger by placing him under the supervision of Captain Levi. With his skills, he will be able to eliminate Eren Jaeger should he cross that line."

Carla's heart sank when she heard the word "eliminate," as she realized that Eren's fate was sealed regardless of wherever he was sent off to.

Darius pondered Erwin's contingency plan before looking down at Carla. ", do you agree with this proposition?"

Carla looked back at Eren hesitantly, before sighing softly, and giving a begrudging "yes..."

Mikasa and Armin gasped in shock and horror at Carla's acceptance of this, however, Eren simply nodded in understanding. Though it

hurt for him to hear his mother accepting his own death, he understood that when given the choice, it's better to take a chance at death than certain death.

"Very well., I will hand custody of your son over to the Survey corps."

Mikasa, Armin, Eren, and Carla gave a collective sigh of relief, but the tension rose again when Darius added to his statement.

"However, I must inform you that if I am to complete this action, then I must also hand you over to the Military Police."

Erwin's eyes widened and he spoke up. "Sir, with all due respect, may I ask why the Military Police should hold custody over Carla when the trial is about her son?"

"Because of her relation to Eren, she needs to be placed under supervision and interrogated for everything she knows. Also, because civilians are expressly forbidden from crossing the wall, Carla Jaeger legally can not be placed under the custody of your regiment, hence why she is being sent to the Military Police. During your next expedition, Carla Jaeger will be detailing any knowledge she possesses to the government until you return."

Before Erwin could speak, Mikasa quickly responded to Darius. "Sir! What if she provides no useful information? Will she be let go?"

"Unfortunately, no. If she fails to provide any useful information, she will be placed within the inner walls, where the Military Police will monitor her activity until the suspicion has been cleared." Mikasa clenched her eyes shut, but then they snapped open when Darius spoke up again.

"However, if the Survey Corps manages to return from a successful expedition using Eren's powers, then I shall release her right away. But if Eren and the Survey Corps fail their expedition, both Carla and Eren will remain in the hands of the Military Police."

Mikasa tried to argue against this, but Armin held her back before she made things worse.

"Carla Jaeger, I must apologize for this, but you must understand that this is for your own good, as well as the good of your son. There may be people in the walls that will want to use you as leverage against your son, and I can not leave you in such a vulnerable position. If you agree to remain under the jurisdiction of the Military Police, then I shall ensure your safety, close your son's case, and send him to the Survey Corps. What is your final say on the matter?"

Carla felt as though she had no other choice but to accept these conditions. If this was the only way to save her son's life, she would do it in a heartbeat.

"I accept this arrangement," she said. "However, I would like to know if my caretaker, Daisuke Serizawa, could come along with me to the inner walls."

Darius nodded before looking to Serizawa. ", as the official caretaker of Carla Jaeger, do you wish to continue caring for her while within the inner walls? If you wish to remain her caretaker, you must know that your activities will be monitored as well."

Serizawa was hesitant to take the offer, especially since he needed to avoid the offer for the sake of his friend, Huang Meng. However, looking down at Carla, he could tell that she wanted him by her side so she could have someone familiar in an unfamiliar place. Even though he only gained her trust so that he could find Grisha at first, the time he spent with her led him to see her as a true friend, and he began to genuinely care for her, just like Huang, Erika, Ymir, Stefan, Junichiro, Jurgen...

Emiko.

"I accept this arrangement," Serizawa answered. "It is my duty to look after her, and I shall continue to do so for her sake."

Carla gave Serizawa a warm smile which he couldn't help but reciprocate.

"Very well then. That concludes Eren Jaeger's case."

With one final slam of Darius' hand, Eren was sent off to the Scouts. He gave his mother one last hug goodbye before he was taken by Levi and Erwin back to the base.

Later that night, Serizawa was packing up all his belongings at the Jaeger household, with the help of a few MP soldiers. Huang floated in the air nearby, his body fully in its mist form and taking the shape of a cloud to avoid suspicion, as he surveyed the scene. After the soldiers placed everything into a carriage to be transported to Sina, Carla looked at her house somberly, before a soldier pushed her towards the carriage while they waited for Serizawa, who stood inside the house. After checking to make sure no one was there, he pulled out his cell phone and called Huang, who lowered himself to the ground and returned to his human form in the woods, where he pulled his phone out of his pocket and answered it.

"I'm guessing whatever's happening isn't good news," Huang commented.

"You're right about that. I'm going to be under military supervision for the foreseeable future, so things will only be more difficult from here on," Serizawa said.

"You know, you could always just bail, doc. It's clear we're not getting any closer to finding and killing that fucker like this."

"Things have... gotten more complicated."

"Uh-huh. Sure."

"And we're not trying to kill Grisha, Huang. We still need him to help us save Erika."

"Right... and **then** we kill him."

Serizawa sighed. "I'll admit, I do want him to pay for what he's done, but I'm not taking any part in that. I'll be washing my hands of him once it's over. If you and Erika still want to kill him after we save her, I won't stop you."

"Appreciated. But back on topic, why would you put yourself in that situation just for her? It's not like we have anything to gain at this point."

"Carla can't be left alone in the hands of the Government. We have no idea what these people would do to her. And besides that, I made a promise to her that I would take care of her until her children return."

Huang smiled. "You're a good person, Serizawa. You know that?"

Serizawa simply sighed in response, prompting Huang's smile to fade.

"So, um... did you manage to get any clues as to what Grisha was up to behind these walls?"

"Yes. I managed to learn from her that Grisha was hiding something in his basement-"

One of the MPs suddenly opened the door, startling Serizawa and causing him to hang up on Huang and put his phone away quickly.

"Hello? Serizawa?!" Huang clenched his fist and hissed with frustration. "Damn it!"

Huang turned back into his vapor form, his phone shut off and nested within the center of the cloud as he took back to the skies. Meanwhile, Serizawa was escorted to the carriage with Carla.

Carla was looking at the key to the basement while Serizawa took the opportunity to reach into his pocket and turn his phone off. He

then watched as Carla lowered her head and held the key in both her hands while resting her hands on her lap. Tears began dripping into her cupped palms, but then she suddenly saw a hand grasp hers. She looked up and saw that Serizawa had moved to her side of the carriage, and a bit of happiness broke through her saddened expression.

The carriage suddenly halted, confusing the two. They both heard voices outside the carriage, so Serizawa stood up to check and see what was going on. He peeked outside and found that the Survey Corps was there. Carla wiped her tears away while Serizawa was approached by Erwin on horseback.

"Does Carla have a moment to talk?" Erwin asked.

"I do," Carla answered as she pushed herself towards the ramp, where Serizawa helped her down. "What do you need?"

Erwin climbed off of his horse to speak to her. "I would like to thank you for your help in our case, despite the unorthodox methods you used. However, I also came to apologize for your situation. I know you did this for Eren, but I had hoped for a much different outcome."

"Maybe things could have been different if I just wasn't there," Carla said. "I feel like my involvement in the case was never meant to be."

"And yet, you managed to save your son. If you hadn't calmed his outburst earlier, lord knows what would have happened."

"I appreciate your kind words, Erwin, but we must get going. I wouldn't want to upset the officers."

"Before you leave, you should at least say goodbye to your son."

Carla's eyes widened and her back straightened as Erwin moved out of the way, revealing Eren, draped in the Scout regiment cloak. He quickly ran up to her, before stopping right in front of her as tears of joy began to escape from her eyes.

"Hey, mom." Eren greeted.

Carla lunged forwards and wrapped Eren in her arms, staining his blazer with her tears. "Eren, I-I'm so sorry for hitting you! I was just so afraid that you would have said something wrong, and I just-"

"Mom, it's okay! I kind of deserved it, anyway." Eren scratched the back of his head and smiled. "I thought I could convince everyone if I told them what was on my mind, but in hindsight, it was pretty stupid, and I'm glad you knocked some sense into me."

Carla released Eren from her grasp, then saw Levi walking up next to Erwin. "That Captain Levi... He's not really going to kill you, right?"

Eren huffed awkwardly. "He certainly **can**, " He began. "But as long as I stay in line, things should be fine." Eren then noticed Carla's worried expression.

"I know that job is dangerous, but the people themselves seem a bit... threatening."

"That's what makes them so capable of fighting the titans head-on! And they promised that they'd defend me to the best of their abilities!"

Before Carla could reply, the coachman of the carriage shouted from the front, "Hey, hurry up back there! We gotta get to wall Sina before my boss gets pissed at me again!"

Carla sighed softly before hugging Eren again. "I never expected you to be destined for greatness, Eren. I always believed that you were special just for being born into this world, and for being my son. I'm so proud of the person you're bound to become."

Eren smiled and hugged her back. "Thank you, mom. I'll never forget that promise. I'll be back for you, and I will bring you back home." Eren then watched as Carla removed the key from around her neck and wrapped it around Eren's.

He smiled as he looked down upon the key, then looked at Serizawa. "Thank you for dedicating your time to looking after my mom, . I truly appreciate it."

"Of course, Eren," Serizawa then helped Carla return to her seat.

As the coachman moved the carriage forward, with the wagon following along, and Eren and the Survey Corps turned and left, Huang watched from the skies and smiled at them. Watching Eren's interactions with his mother reminded him of his own parents. A tear then formed in his eye however as he remembered their deaths vividly, but he stopped his train of thought right before he reached the part where he was "recruited" into Project: Atlas, and simply followed the carriage for the rest of the night.

-Author's notes-

I don't really have much to say about this chapter, so I'll just skip to the reviews.

Guest Account: "Honestly, I personally think Battra just needs to be humbled cause he's an idiot and not realizing that the creatures hunting humans ARE HUMAN"

No, he knows. Gigan does too, actually. It's just that in their time, they never discovered a way to turn pure titans back into humans, so pure Titans just aren't considered human anymore until they eat a titan shifter.

Ideal Man: "Damn, I thought this was about MechaGodzilla"

MechaGodzilla will be in this fan fiction, it's just going to take a while for him to show up.

Gift of Knowledge

-G-

"Behold, my followers! Look upon this vile creature that had dared to invade the sanctity of our home!"

As soldiers, workers, and citizens walked on by, a priest from the church of the walls stood on top of a podium and preached to a small crowd of onlookers as he gestured to the corpse of the giant spider that invaded Trost, which was still in the process of being removed. As wagons filled with green guts and viscera were being hauled off to bonfires to be burned, the priest continued his sermon undaunted.

"Was it felled by us mortals or the titans from outside the walls?" The priest asked rhetorically before swinging his arm out dramatically. "NEIGH! What you see here was the work of the Black Angel, the mighty blade of the gods! When all others failed to stop it, he was there to save us in our time of need, for he is our savior from on high! The angel that guards over us all, and who watches over us every day!" He then raised his hands up into the air while looking up at the sky. "Glory unto the Black Angel! Glory Hallelujah!"

"GLORY HALLELUJAH!" The crowd repeated, mimicking the priest's gesture.

And he wasn't wrong per se. Up in the sky, Gigan was indeed circling the walls to make sure no more breaches or monsters were approaching. As he expected, there were not, but this also disappointed him a bit. He enjoyed killing all those titans in Trost after having to watch them roam around in the wall he failed to save for years and felt a bit disappointed at how quickly it ended. Still, he refrained from going out on a Titan killing spree just because he was mad at them all. For the sake of humanity, he had to keep restraining himself.

After finding no more breaches in the wall, he decided to take his mind off of the Titans by having a quick chat with Eren. So, after landing in Wall Maria and using his Nano Metal spray to create an O.R.C.A., he called out to his titan-shifting friend.

{Yo, Eren! How've you been, buddy?} Gigan asked, with him able to hear Eren's answer from across the walls.

"Can't talk much, Gigan. I'm a little busy," Eren replied.

{Oh, sorry. Though, if I may ask, busy with what?}

"Cleaning..." he groaned.

-E-

Eren used a feather duster to clear out cobwebs on the ceiling and in the chandeliers. It was a tedious job, but there was one consolation for him: that being that after this, he would be done for the day. Still, the work was dull, and the room was huge, so he was happy that Gigan called him to help pass the time. After getting introductions out of the way, Eren explained to Gigan that he was put on trial, as well as the results of said trial, and everything that happens in it. After Eren regaled the story, Gigan was left surprised and a little bit saddened by the fact that people didn't trust Eren as well as what happened to his mother.

{I'm sorry about how all that went, Eren,} Gigan said. **{From what you told me about your mom, she sounds like such a lovely person. She didn't deserve to be treated like that.}**

"It's alright Gigan," Eren replied. "The important thing is that she's safe and that I'm alive. At least as long as I don't fall out of line..."

{I wouldn't worry about that. You're a good kid. You'd never betray mankind, right?}

"Of course not! I would never betray my own kind!"

"OI!"

Eren jumped and turned around to see Levi leaning against the doorframe with his arms crossed. Eren saluted Levi in greeting and immediately put his conversation with Gigan on hold.

"Having fun chatting it up with your not-so-little friend, Jaeger?" Levi remarked. "Your cleaning in the other rooms was subpar at best. I want each room spotless by the time I get back. Am I understood?"

"Yes, sir!" Eren replied. With that, Levi walked away, and Eren sighed before returning to sweeping.

Later that night...

The Levi squad, comprised of Petra Rall, Oruo Bozard, Gunther Schultz, Eld Gin, and of course, Levi Ackerman, sat at a dinner table with Eren, each with a cup of coffee in front of them. The squad was sitting together discussing recent events, new developments that resulted from the recent events at Trost, and the upcoming wave of new recruits to the regiment.

"So, it's safe to assume our standing orders will stretch into next week," Eld said. "But word through the grapevine is that we're gearing up for a big mission about a month from now, where a bunch of wet-behind-the-ears graduates are slated to be our backup."

"Why put them through that?" Gunther asked. "The cadets have been through enough with the last Titan attack, so why subject them to that again so soon after?"

"Makes you wonder how many of those sniveling runts pissed themselves," Oruo jested, prompting an annoyed look from Petra before she turned back to face the group.

"This can't be right, can it captain?" Petra inquired, looking over at Levi.

"Mission planning isn't my responsibility," Levi said. "It's Erwin's. And you know how obsessive he is over each and every angle."

"Ain't that the truth?" Eld said. "Especially given how unique the situation is. Consider how bad the situation of wall Maria was, how many people died, before hope arrived in a form no one could have expected, and then five years later, the same thing happens again, only this time with even more unknowns to consider, none of which we're entirely sure how to deal with."

Eld then turns everyone's attention over to Eren, who gasps softly as a bead of sweat trickles down his cheek.

"Most of us still find it hard to believe. How do your powers even work?"

Eren sighed softly. He didn't want to disappoint the Scouts, but at the same time, he had to answer honestly, and the honest truth was that he had no idea how his powers worked. Eren sighed deeply one more time before stating, "I don't know how any of this works. Turning into a titan, speaking to Gigan, any of it. I only know a few basic things, like that my transformation is triggered by me injuring myself, that I turn back by focusing on only moving my human body in the naip, that turning into a titan drains a lot of my energy, and that the longer I stay in my form, the weaker it gets."

"You're not getting anything out of him that isn't already on the record," Levi said. "Not that it won't stop you know who from trying." Levi sipped his coffee as Eren raised an eyebrow.

"Who are you talking about, captain?"

As if on cue, the group heard someone slam into the locked door, followed by a muffled groan of pain. Petra got up and undid the lock, and with that, the doors swung open, revealing section commander Hange Zoe at the door. She placed a hand on her hip and waved to her comrades as she entered the room.

"Good evening, team Levi!" Hange greeted with an ear-to-ear smile.
"How is castle life treating all of you?"

"You're too early..." Levi groaned.

"Am I? Well, I suppose I couldn't help myself!"

"Section commander Hange?" Eren gasped out.

"Oh please, Eren, no need to be so formal! Just 'Hange' will do." She then stood next to him, still keeping up her uncomfortably cheery demeanor. "In the event that you haven't pieced it together yet, it's my job to spearhead the Scout Regiments' research efforts, including the newly formed Gigan research division."

"Gigan research division?" Petra parroted while scratching her head.

Hange shrugged, "It's a work-in-progress title. But regardless," Hange turned back to Eren. "Eren, I'd like you to help me with said research!"

"Um, how can I help you?"

"HOW!?" Hange slammed her hands on the table and leaned in close to Eren, her smile widening, her pupils shrinking, and her cheeks turning a shade of red. "Don't be silly, Eren! Your powers make you the greatest link between humanity and Gigan! This is our opportunity to obtain every bit of knowledge he has locked away in his head! Please, say you'll join me on a quest of scientific discovery!"

"Well, I'd love to help you, but I'm not allowed to do anything without jurisdiction from the higher-ups."

"Levi, what's on the docket for him tomorrow?"

"Clearing out all the weeds?"

"Excellent! Then it's settled! It'll just be you and me tomorrow!"

"O-okay then. What do you want me to do for you?" Eren asked obliviously.

Levi and his squad, knowing where this was going, picked up their dishes and left the dining room while Hange began talking Eren's ears off about the recently captured Gigan Jr., and abnormal titan that she was doing experiments on just outside the castle, and then began rambling about her fanatical love of science and studying titans. Hoping that he could learn something new about the titans, Eren listened to what Hange had to say. That is until he heard a familiar voice in his head.

{Eren, are you free yet?} Gigan asked.

"Gigan?" Eren replied, causing Hange to halt her story entirely and turn her attention squarely to Eren.

"W-wait, are you talking to him?! What's he saying?! What does he-" however she stooped when Eren hushed her so he could talk to Gigan more easily. However, Eren then had an idea and offered to meet Gigan outside. After giving Gigan their location, he offered to let Hange join them, an opportunity she immediately jumped at. Hange immediately dragged Eren outside so that they could meet Gigan.

Meanwhile, three people in ODM gear grappled down into an area just outside the survey corps base where Gigan Jr. was located. They removed their hoods, revealing themselves to be Annie Leonhardt, Reiner Braun, and Bertholdt Hoover. The three checked to make sure there were no Scouts around, before quietly discussing their plan.

"Alright, Annie, while you deal with the captured titan, we'll stand guard and signal you if something's coming," Reiner explained.

"Understood. I'll make it quick."

"Good luck, Annie," Bertholdt said as Annie zipped down to the enclosure.

Luckily for her, the titan was inactive during the nighttime. She slowly approached the titan, keeping her footsteps light as she watched her surroundings to make sure no guards came by. However, just as she was in position to go for the titans' naip, she heard someone approaching and hid. She leaned in to see who was there and saw that it was Eren and Hange, there to observe the captured titan.

"This is Gigan Jr. The titan I told you about earlier," Hange said.
"He'll be assisting us in discovering more aspects of your powers."

"Is he somehow involved with what we're doing tonight?"

"Nah! He's sound asleep right now, and I wouldn't want to wake him before tomorrow's experiment. Speaking of which, where is Gigan?"

Almost on cue, the ground began to rumble as Gigan slowly lowered himself, the trees bending out of the way as he landed right next to Utgard Castle and illuminated the dark night with the red lights adorning his body. Eren chuckled and then pointed at Gigan with his thumb.

"Right there," he said.

Hange covered her mouth and began hopping in place with excitement as the two left the enclosure to meet Gigan face to face.
"Oh... my... GOODNESS! He's so... so... BEAUTIFUL! HE'S ABSOLUTELY GORGEOUS!"

Gigan chuckled softly and rubbed the back of his head.

"So, Gigan, there are some things that we wanted to ask you."

{No better time than now. Go ahead.}

Hange watched in amazement as what seemed to be simple chirps and grunts to her came out as a full sentence to Eren.

"I think we should probably start by addressing the elephant in the room... why didn't you kill all the titans yet? You clearly have the power, and you know they're our enemy, so why don't you?"

Gigan's non-existent stomach sank, and he lowered his head in shame. **{Shit... I was afraid of this moment... }**

Eren grew concerned with Gigan's tone but allowed him to continue. Gigan held out his chainsaw hand as he began to explain himself.

{You remember how I told you that there's another group of humans out there?}

Eren nods before telling Hange about it, which made her immediately start going nuts with excitement. Eren then looked up at Gigan and asked him to keep going.

{There's more out there than just other humans. By which I mean, there are other monsters. All over the world, there are monsters dominating everything. In the ocean, on land, in the sky, everywhere. The spider from Trost, which is known as a Kumonga, was just one example of these monsters. And ruling over all of these monsters is a gigantic, mystical being known as 'Battr.'}

As Eren translated everything Gigan said, his body began to tremble as the weight of the situation was laid bare before him. However, he wasn't trembling with fear. No... he was trembling with rage. Hearing that these monsters Gigan spoke of had not just forced humanity to hide in tiny clusters, but had even taken away the Ocean that he had longed to see since he learned about it from Armin, filled him with an intense hatred for these monsters. However, Gigan wasn't finished.

{Battr calls himself "the guardian of Earth," however he is not the guardian of humanity. He hates humans with a passion almost as intense as your hatred for the titans... or my hatred for him.}

Eren's head perked up at that last bit.

{About four years ago, Battrra gave me an ultimatum: he agreed to allow me to protect all of you on the condition that I can never help you expand your territory further out into the world. And yes, this includes reclaiming lost territory. Additionally, should I ever kill a monster outside of your territory, he promised that he would kill all of you, and kill me if I got in his way. I've never faced Battrra before, so I have no idea if I could stop him if I did break the deal. This was the only way to 100% ensure Mankind's safety.}

"Gigan..." Eren muttered, "you..."

{I'm sorry Ere-}

"You damn **COWARD!** "

Hange jolted with surprise as Eren looked up at Gigan furiously, his fists clenched tightly.

"So that's why we're still stuck behind these damn walls? That's why my family isn't free out in the world?! That's why we're still living like **cattle** ?! BECAUSE YOU MADE A DEAL WITH ONE OF OUR OPPRESSORS BECAUSE YOU WERE SCARED!?"

{Eren, you don't understand! I'm the only monster on Earth willing to fight for all of you! Without me, you're completely helpless!}

"WITHOUT YOU, THEY HAVE ME!"

{You couldn't kill a single Kumonga on your own! You haven't even scratched the surface of the kaiju out there! There are creatures that can shoot heat rays that can turn boulders into lava in an instant, giant reptiles that practically swim through the ground, dragonflies as big as humans with stingers that can leave you a shriveled husk in a matter of seconds, and if even

one of the SPECIES of kaiju out there decide to come for all of you, and I'm not there to help you all, MANKIND WOULD BE FUCKING EXTINCT!}

Eren tried to come up with a counterargument, but Gigan's argument was bulletproof... until an idea came into his head, to ask him a question. It was a long shot, but it could work.

"Let me ask you this, how do you figure that this 'Battr' is stronger than you?"

Gigan questioned where Eren could be going with this but shrugged and answered. **{He's the brother of another monster of similar strength to me. Her name was 'Mothra,' and unlike her brother, she cared deeply for mankind. However, she was killed in a space battle with a monster named 'Orga.'}**

Suddenly, Pelops appeared in his hud with an awkward look on his face and nervous body language. *"Um... Gigan?"*

{Hugh? What is it, Pelops?}

" I did a bit of research on our files relating to Orga, Mothra, and Battr... and it would appear that you made a slight miscalculation with your scaling..."

Gigan's nerves tensed up as he frantically asked Pelops to explain. Eren asked Gigan if he was alright, but Gigan ignored Eren and focused on Pelops.

" You see... it was theorized by many researchers after the battle between Mothra and Orga... that you could have killed Orga without sustaining a mutual fatality, had you been deployed to intercept Gorath."

{... You've gotta be kidding me.}

" There's more. You see, both parties have faced monsters of near equal power while in their larval stages," Pelops explained. "And their performances were starkly different in these battles. Mothra was able to defeat Megalon in battle without sustaining any damage and forcing him to retreat. Battra however, in his larval form, was killed in a one-on-one battle with a monster whose name I dare not utter, while also inadvertently causing the creation of the 'Zilla' subspecies." Pelops then awkwardly avoided eye contact with Gigan. "Given this information, it was theorized by kaiju researchers... that Mothra was substantially stronger than Battra."

Gigan stood completely still for several moments, just trying to process what this meant. All this time he thought that he had no other choice than to keep his deal with Battra and that there was no other way. That Battra held all the chips in this game. But in reality, he was wrong. He could have been leading mankind back to prosperity, but he had fooled himself into believing that Battra held any power here.

Gigan spread his wings and reeled back before unleashing a scream of unrelenting fury and self-loathing while firing a massive, crimson beacon from his eye up through the atmosphere and out into the depths of space. His chainsaw hands buzzed loudly and glowed with intense heat as he continued to scream, causing Eren, Hange, Annie, Bertholdt, Reiner, and even the Scouts in Utgard to cover their ears. Windows shattered, glasses cracked, and the world shook in terror at the Black Angel's pained fury.

After his several-second-long outburst which felt like it went on for eons, Gigan took a knee before Eren and Hange and embedded his chainsaw hand into the ground like a knight taking a knee before royalty while clutching his sword.

{Eren Jaeger... thank you,} he said. {Thank you for helping me find the truth. And as a token of my gratitude, I promise to slaughter every titan infesting this island, before butchering that bastard, Battra.}

Eren had no idea what changed, but he grinned at Gigan regardless. "Hey, save some titans for me."

Gigan smiled at Eren. **{Of course.}**

After that, Gigan agreed to meet with Eren and Hange again sometime to answer more of their questions. However, while Eren went inside to rest, Hange noticed that Gigan Jr. had been woken up by Gigan's outburst, and began taking notes on it obsessively.

With Hange hounding the titan, Annie knew she'd never be able to get a clean shot on it, so she simply grappled away and regrouped with Reiner and Bertholdt. She then explained the situation, and while Reiner was upset that Annie failed to carry out the mission, Bertholdt was more understanding of Annie's decision.

"It's useless, Reiner," Bertholdt said.

"What do you mean?"

"Gigan has knowledge from **the age of the king**. If he shares that knowledge with them, and he no doubt will, then it will have been a waste of time and an unnecessary risk killing that titan."

Reiner sighed. "You're right. Let's just head back home. We'll come up with a new plan there."

And with that, the three warriors retreated back into the night.

A week later...

Several Scouts stood in formation, their blades drawn and ready as Gigan Jr. was slowly carted out of his area. As the soldiers handling him slowly removed his bindings and holding nails, Eren stood in front of him with Hange by his side.

"Now remember, Eren, this is a test, not an execution," she said.

"We're just trying to study the titans' fighting style against an

opponent of similar size to them. So please, try not to hurt him too badly."

It was such a surreal request for someone to ask him not to kill a titan, but he obliged their requests regardless. Everyone fanned out once Gigan Jr. was free, and Eren immediately bit into his hand. An electric aura enveloped him, and his titan body formed around him, transforming him into a 15-meter-titan once again. The 13-meter-tall Gigan Jr. started things off by lunging for Eren and chomping at him, however, Eren easily grabbed the titan and threw him down to the ground. Hange began vigorously scribbling in her notebook as Gigan Jr. rose up from the ground, its injuries slowly regenerating. It attempted to swipe at Eren, only for Eren to grab its arm, and with one elbow slam, break it off by the joint. However, Gigan Jr., despite screeching in pain, still went for a bite to Eren's shoulder, causing him to let out a similar howl as the smaller titan dangled from his shoulder, its teeth firmly sunken into it.

Hange bit back tears watching Gigan Jr being beaten down like this, before writing in her notes, "It seems that while Titans can feel pain, they are able to easily ignore it when attempting to attack their prey."

Eren eventually ripped the titan off his shoulder and began slamming it on the ground, again and again, shattering its ribs in the process and leaving its chest a mangled, steaming mess. After noting that Gigan Jr. was still fighting even with its ribs broken, Hange called off the fight and called for Gigan Jr. to be re-contained. Eren then kneeled and emerged from his titan with the help of Petra, while Hange rushed to make sure Gigan Jr. was okay... only for it to snap its jaws at her. As Hange laughed manically, Eren stared at her in disbelief.

"Okay, I don't mean to be disrespectful," Eren said. "But what's up with her?"

Petra sighed. "Who knows?"

While waiting for Gigan Jr. to regenerate so they could perform their next test, Eren was at the stables with Eld and Gunther. The three of them were discussing the recruitment drive which was scheduled for that night, with Eren being unsure of if any of his comrades in the cadet corps would be willing to join them. While they were talking, Levi suddenly arrived and informed Gunther and Eld that they were going on patrol, however, he ordered Eren to stay behind, as he was currently under Hange's supervision. Eren nodded and watched as they rode away on horseback. And just in time too, as Hange soon arrived and grabbed Eren by the arm before dragging him back to the testing grounds with a glimmer of excitement in her eyes.

-J-

The cadets waited in front of an empty podium, most of them discussing which regiment they were going to join. Among these soldiers, Connie, Armin, and Sasha were talking about their choices of military branches to enlist in. While they were talking, Jean happened to walk by them and overheard their conversation.

"I'm not sure if I can bring myself to join the Survey corps anymore," Connie said. "Not after what happened. The titans were so much more horrifying than I expected... though, I heard that Jean was considering joining them."

Jean sighed with annoyance and continued on, but then he heard Armin speak up and stopped dead in his tracks.

"Marco did mention that to me," he said. "I think because of that, he's reconsidering joining the Military Police as well."

Jean's eyes widened and he let out a trembling gasp as he heard that. He remembered Marco telling him about his dream to serve the king, and couldn't fathom why he would throw away that opportunity.

"No..." Jean muttered, catching the attention of Armin and Connie.

"W-what was that, Jean?" Armin asked.

Jean brushed off his question and went to go find Marco, hoping to talk some sense into him. After searching around, he found him talking with Sasha and Mina, about what? He didn't care. He immediately broke up the conversation and dragged Marco somewhere private so that he could talk to him one on one.

"Jean, what's gotten into you?!" Marco asked.

"What the hell's gotten into **you**, Marco?!" Jean barked back, "You're really thinking of joining the Survey Corps?!"

"Y-yes, I am. Is there something wrong with that?" "What are you thinking?! You're just gonna throw away your one chance to join the Military Police and serve the king, and you're not even conflicted about it?!"

"W-well, I heard you were joining the Scouts, so I thought I'd join too."

"WHY?! That makes no damn sense!"

"Well, then why are you considering switching branches, Jean?"

Jean hesitated for a moment to formulate a response, before leaning against a wall as he answered Marco.

"I wanted to join because... b-because I felt so damn useless."

Marco's eyes widened with surprise before Jean continued, "After seeing the things that we saw at Trost, I realized the threats outside are so much bigger than we expected. I realized that I need to contribute in some way, and I could never do that if I let all my hard work be locked away in the safe and easy life behind the walls."

Jean wrapped his arms around his own shoulders and tensed up as he continued his confession. "I'm terrified, Marco. But knowing that I can do more than just sit on my ass is what drove me to make this decision."

Marco smiled and placed a hand on his friend's shoulder. "Jean, that's how I feel too. I do want to serve the king, but I feel like I can do more for all of humanity if I join the Survey Corps. As you said, I'd rather do more than sit around doing nothing. Plus, I'm still serving the king by helping mankind move forwards."

Jean was surprised by Marco's reasoning. Despite their differences in personality, they both had the same values and inner conflicts that caused them to change their goals in order to benefit humanity. Finally understanding Marco's reasons, Jean felt content and felt as though his decision was validated.

Very soon, the ceremony began, with every cadet standing together in the dead of night, the podium and the field before it illuminated by torchlight. Ontop the podium stood Erwin Smith, commander of the survey corps, who introduced himself as such to the crowd. He then announced that today was the day when the cadets would each choose their regiment.

"Let's cut to the chase here," Erwin said. "The Scouts need you. We need all the warm bodies we can get. After the recent Titan attack, you now know firsthand the horrors that await you, as well as the limits of your own skill. However, in the aftermath of this battle, humanity has gained an unprecedented advancement that could lead them to victory. I am of course referring to Eren Jaeger and Gigan. After selflessly fighting for our safety, and doing their part to help us recover from the recent battle, they have proven themselves unquestionably loyal to our cause. Hope lives within these two. Furthermore, they did not just help us stave off the threat of the titans, but offered us a means to discern the truth of their origin, as well as the origins of any other monsters that lurk outside the walls!"

Everyone gasped in shock and they began muttering amongst eachother.

"Eren's ability to communicate with Gigan has allowed us to discover secrets about this world that were far beyond what mankind could possibly comprehend. This, coupled with the potential secrets hidden

within the cellar of Eren's home in Shingonshina, could give us what we need to break free from the shackles that have been placed upon us one hundred years ago."

This information made excitement rise in the crowd. Hearing that they could finally end the reign of the titans excited them, and they grew more confident with their odds of defeating the Titans. However, Erwin wasn't quite finished yet.

"Before we can reach the aforementioned cellar in Shingonshina, we must first traverse Wall Maria," Erwin said. "Of course, this is easier said than done, however, Gigan's presence had shaken the population of the Titans to a significant enough degree that we can reach Shingonshina without much interference. If we were to encounter any Titans on the way, however, we must be willing to risk our lives for humanity. Which is why I must ask you all, are you willing to give up your lives for mankind?"

The graduates began considering Erwin's words carefully, and doubts began to creep in once again, even for those that had already decided that they were going to join the Scouts. Mikasa and Armin were the only ones whose minds were clear of any doubts as to where they planned to go.

"That is all I have to say to you all. Those of you who wish to join a different regiment may now leave."

With that, many of the graduates turned around and began to walk away. After several minutes of people walking away, around half of the graduates remained, many of whom were previously convinced by Eren to join them a while back. Erwin was impressed by the high turnout of new recruits. Erwin smiled and saluted the recruits, welcoming them to the Scout Regiment, a salute that the recruits returned in kind.

-E-

After cleaning up the horse stables, Eren wiped some sweat off his face and stepped outside. He saw Oruo standing next to the door as expected, but then his eyes widened in surprise as he saw Mikasa and Armin pass by. After requesting to speak with them, which Oruo allowed as long as he didn't take too long, Eren ran after them while calling their names, prompting them to turn around.

"Eren!" Mikasa gasped as Eren stopped before them.

"Man, am I glad to see you guys!" He said before Mikasa suddenly grabbed his arm and looked worriedly into his eyes.

"Are you alright?" She asked. "Have they done anything to hurt you, like subjecting you to some sort of cruel experiments?"

Eren chuckled softly with a slightly sinister tone to it.

"W-what's so funny?" Armin asked.

"Nothing," Eren said. "It's just, the only experiment they did with me recently was really more of an opportunity to wail on a captive titan they had."

"Woah, no way. They have a titan in captivity?"

"Yeah, they do. I think Hange called it 'Gigan Junior' or something?"

"Hey, Eren!" Connie suddenly called.

"Long time, no see!" Sasha said.

"Hey, guys! You're all here!" Eren smiled at them, realizing that this must mean they all joined too, which Connie confirmed. "So, does that mean Annie, Jean, and Marco joined the MPs?"

"Just Annie, actually," Marco said as he and Jean stepped out of the crowd.

Jean crossed his arms, expecting Eren to gloat or mock him after all the times the two were at each other's throats. But instead, Jean was met with an outstretched hand and a smile.

"Glad to see you came, Jean," he said.

After everyone spent a moment enjoying the reunion with Eren, Dieter Ness approached the new recruits, announcing that their hooded capes, which were part of the standard Scout regiment uniforms, had arrived. Eren and the others draped themselves in these green capes, and while doing so, Eren quietly contemplated just how much things had changed since training.

As he stood with his comrades, his eyes widened in surprise and confusion as he saw a vision of a mysterious woman with dark brown hair tied into a bun standing in front of him. She was dressed in cargo pants and a short, white tube shirt that exposed her toned abs, with a black, open coat draped over her shoulders. Beneath her piercing eyes were a set of strange red markings that almost resembled scars. The mysterious woman tilted her head down to look Eren directly in the eyes, and gave him the faintest smile, before speaking in a voice that wasn't familiar to him but wasn't unfamiliar either.

"I almost forgot that face," she then looked up and scanned the crowd. "But I'll never forget this moment."

Later that day, the new recruits of the scouts, Eren included, were all together in a warehouse while the veterans sorted out their living quarters. In there, Eren learned that they would all be participating in the upcoming expedition, however, while they were talking, Jean raised a question that he had been holding onto for a while.

"Hey, Eren," Jean asked. "What was up with Gigan a couple of nights ago?"

"You heard that?!" Eren asked, dumbfounded. Jean scoffed at Eren's surprise.

"I'd be surprised if your mom didn't hear it all the way in the interior," Jean remarked. "Plus, it'd be pretty hard to miss a giant, crimson pillar suddenly appearing and breaching the damn clouds! Seriously, what happened that made him do that?"

"Well, that night, I finally asked him why he didn't kill all the titans yet."

The other scouts began muttering amongst themselves. No one had actually thought about that until now, but the mere mention of that made them realize that it was actually a good question.

"And what was his answer?"

Eren clenched his teeth and quietly sighed. "Apparently, there's another monster out there named 'Battr', and it gave Gigan an ultimatum, saying that if he ever killed any monsters outside of our territory, then he would wipe us all out. And not just Battr, but many other monsters, which, without Gigan, could wipe us all out easily."

Everyone gasped in shock at this news. Even Mikasa seemed genuinely disturbed at this revelation.

"Well, that explains why the titans are still here, but it doesn't explain why Gigan did that last night."

"Gigan claimed that he didn't want to break Battr's deal because he assumed he was the stronger of the two, so I asked him why he thought that. He told me that he was the brother of another monster, and then... well, I don't really know. Something that his 'Artificial Intelligence' companion must have said somehow made him come to a realization which made him immediately abandon the deal."

"Artificial what?"

"I don't really know what that is either." Eren awkwardly rubbed his arm.

"You don't know? You're the only one of us who can talk to that thing, and even you don't actually know what's going on in it's head?"

Eren lowered his head slightly. "No, not really. I have so many questions for him, and the first opportunity I had to ask them, I was only able to ask him one."

Jean sighed, then turned to the rest of the Scouts. "You hear that everyone? What a fine situation we've found ourselves in! Our lives and all of mankind's lives are in the hands of a titan shifter who can't even kill one overgrown arachnid on his own, and a giant monster that we barely know anything about, and just as the cherry on top, there are apparently even more monsters out there. I'm guessing we're all gonna end up dead as soon as the expedition begins."

"Jean, knock it off," Marco said. "What's the point of chastising him?"

"Listen Marco," Jean replied. "Unlike you, most of us aren't willing to lay down our lives for other people on a whim. We need a reason. We need to know what we're laying down our lives for. Otherwise, we might hesitate at a crucial moment. What I and the rest of us need is a guarantee from Eren. We need him to show us that he's worth dying for." Jean then turned and grabbed Eren by the shoulders while pulling him close. "Can you do that? Because if you can, we're with you all the way."

Eren's face immediately went from a look of surprise at the sudden grab to a look of determination. "I don't just think I can... I know it."

-A&E-

Later that night...

Armin wandered through the castle, a candle in hand, as he spent the night getting a feel for the castle he would be staying in for the foreseeable future. Plus, he wasn't really able to sleep anyway, as he was nervous about the upcoming mission. As he wandered through the castle however, he caught a glimpse of Eren sitting outside in the

garden, alone. He was looking up at the stars, his arms behind him and his stretched legs out in front of him. He seemed sad for some reason, so Armin set down his candle and went outside to meet him.

"Eren?" He asked. "What are you doing out this late at night?"

Eren sighed softly. "I couldn't sleep," he said. "I can't stop thinking about... the outside world." Armin noticed Eren choke a bit on his own words and sat down next to him.

"I'd expect you to be a bit more excited thinking about that," Armin remarked. "Don't you remember what we saw in my book?"

"I remember..." he replied. "But... well, remember how Gigan told me that there were more monsters outside?"

Armin nodded.

"Well, he told me that these monsters were everywhere. In the sky, underground, on land... and even in the ocean."

Armin's eyes widened as Eren continued.

"When you arrived today, I was so happy to see you, but then I was reminded of what Gigan told me, and it all finally set in," Eren said as he started to grow misty eyed. "I realized that if what Gigan said was true, then our dream of exploring the world together may have all been for naught... because they've already taken everything from us."

Armin embraced his best friend as a tear rolled down his cheek and onto his shoulder.

"If it's any consolation," Armin said. "I don't think we need to be worried."

Eren's eyes widened as he looked up at Armin.

"I know Gigan told you that he was the only monster willing to fight for us, but I don't believe that," Armin then looked up to the stars. "The world is too big for there to only be one monster out there willing to fight for us. I know that somewhere out there, there are more monsters that are willing to stand by our side."

Eren looked up to the stars and couldn't help but smile at his friend's optimistic outlook. The thought that there really could be more monsters like Gigan out there filled him with a sense of comfort. However, unbeknownst to him, Armin didn't actually believe that. Ever since Eren became a titan, Armin didn't really know what to believe, but given mankind's situation, it was very likely in his mind that prior to Gigan, there were no monsters looking after them. However, he would say what he needed to if it meant re-igniting the flame in Eren's heart that always drove him forwards.

Eventually, Armin helped Eren off the ground and the two went back inside.

-G-

The dark, quiet night was suddenly and spontaneously alive with noise and light as Gigan's eye beam streaked across the abandoned cities and towns, incinerating hundreds of sleeping Titans as he quickly approached the gate of Wall Maria. Upon seeing the holes in both, Gigan smirked and switched to his Nano-Metal spray hands, and patched the holes with the ACTTG blueprints, renamed to just ACTGs. He proceeded to patch both holes, preventing titans from entering or exiting. A sinister grin then stretched across his face as he looked down upon the titans roaming the streets of Shingonshina, and switched back to his chainsaw hands.

However, high up in the sky, Battara was watching all of this take place... and it worried him greatly. If Gigan was forgoing the deal this flagrantly, it could only mean one thing: He realized that he was likely the stronger of the two, and no longer feared him. Realizing this, Battara knew that fighting him head-on, or just going ahead and

attacking the humans right off the bat would be his downfall. So instead, he went with a different strategy to defeat Gigan.

Batra flew to the center of the island, and, using his psychic powers, called out to all the sleeping giants on and around Paradis island, avoiding the ire of Gigan.

[Children of Earth, I call upon you. It is time for you to awaken and bring about the doomsday of humankind. Destroy them, incinerate them, trample them, devour them, and leave not a single one to tell the tale.]

Deep below the ocean surrounding the island of Paradis, a giant cephalopod monster known as a Gezora swam alongside a school of others of its kind, gradually being lured closer and closer to land by the call of an Alpha. His trance like state however made him a prime target for an underwater predator, armed with powerful jaws, claws, and a craving for calamari dinner.

The Gezora was suddenly and violently ripped out of the school and slammed to the ground, knocking him out of his trance. He swung his tentacles about while releasing a chilling mist from his suction cups, but his assailant maneuvered out of the way of the flailing. Sharp spikes running down her back suddenly began to glow green, and a super heated beam of atomic fire, scorching the squid's body and boiling the water around them.

With her prey now dead, the predator Kaiju began to feast on her kill. Her breath beam left the squid nice and crispy, just the way she liked it. However, as she began to sink her teeth into this banquet, she overheard the alpha call once again.

[Children of Earth, I call upon you. It is time for you to awaken and bring about the doomsday of humankind. Destroy them, incinerate them, trample them, devour them, and leave not a single one to tell the tale.]

This didn't sound good to her, so after eating her full, she began following the school of Gezorras to land, where she saw them all dragging themselves forwards. The predator couldn't make out what they were headed towards from this distance, but she could infer that there were humans out there given the order given in the alpha call, so she began to burrow underground and towards the structure in the distance.

-G-

Though Battra was successful in awakening all the monsters deep beneath the island of Paradis, and drawing in many of the monsters in the surrounding ocean, he failed to account for one other monster sleeping in a mountain deep below the sea, in a cave with no exit, illuminated by small, glowing, orange particles that floated through the air like fireflies. The beast within the mountain was surrounded by 17-meter-tall, skeletal humanoid creatures with lanky limbs, only one eye, and long tails. They wandered around the towering leviathan as they chipped away at the crystals lining the walls of the enclosed cave they resided in, using their massive claws like pickaxes.

As the great leviathan opened his eyes, he could faintly hear the voice of an old enemy, and hearing it caused him to go into a rage. He began to thrash about, the gigantic chains attached to his wrists, ankles, and tail clanging loudly. All the eyeless humanoids then ran for cover as his back began to glow purple, and a thin, purple beam suddenly fired from his mouth. However, the beam ended up igniting several of the orange particles, which then exploded, filling up the entire room and making the monster howl with pain and fury.

When his vision cleared, he found that the majority of his minions had been killed. No matter, he could always just make more of them. His tail suddenly began to bulge as a second mouth on the tip of it vomited out a massive sac that contained dozens more of the humanoid creatures. The permanent grin etched onto the leviathan's face widened as he watched these new minions get to work.

He would get out soon. He could feel it.

No force on Earth can hold the king of the monsters forever.

Destroy all Monsters

-G-

A month had passed since the Cadets had joined the Scouts. They had studied the Scouts' plan to reach Shingonshina extensively, and now, the day had finally come for the 57th recon-mission. Church bells chimed throughout the streets of Trost as the Scout Regiment, all on horseback, stood before the shining, silver, futuristic gate that lead into Wall Maria. Gigan swooped overhead and then hovered just over the city with a smile on his face as he looked down upon the Scouts with pride.

Mikasa was waiting with the people in her squad with a determined look on her face when she suddenly felt a gentle tug on her cape. She looked down curiously and saw the little girl that she saved back during the Trost incident standing below her. The girl started hopping in place while showing her a drawing she made of her beating up Dimo Reeves. Mikasa smiled seeing it and saluted the girl, which she returned with a bright smile on her face before her mother pulled her away. Mikasa then looked back up and saw Sasha smiling at her.

"You know, you can be adorable sometimes, Mika," Sasha said, making Mikasa frantically hide her increasing blush with her scarf.

"D-do you really think so?" Mikasa muttered.

"What was that?"

"NOTHING!" She exclaimed. "Also, what did I tell you about nicknames?!"

"S-SORRY!" Sasha raised up her hands as a bead of sweat formed on her forehead.

"HEY! PAY ATTENTION, GREENHORNS!" Oruo shouted, drawing their attention back to the gate as it began to open with a pneumatic

hiss.

The ground rumbled as the gate rose and revealed the outer walls to them. Upon the gate fully opening, Erwin called for them all to move and they began to ride out of the gate. As they began to ride, they noticed an abnormal titan approaching. The support squad was about to move in to attack when suddenly, a thin, concentrated blast of Gigan's beam completely incinerated it. Eren looked up to see Gigan wave at them before he flew ahead of them. Eren gave Gigan a quick smile before addressing Oruo, who was riding right next to him.

"Be straight with me," he said. "Do you think my friends really have a shot at taking down a titan?"

"I should certainly hope so! Because otherwise, what have they been training for?" He then looked Eren in the eyes. "But listen, prepared or not, you're all Scouts now, so you'd better be ready to choke back those fears and be ready to-

And then a sudden bump made him bite his tongue.

As the scouts rode off, Erwin held out his arm and ordered the scouts to go into long-range formation. And with that, the squads each split off into their own separate group in the formation. Very soon after they went into formation, however, Erwin saw red smoke signals being shot up into the air, signifying that a titan had been spotted. In response, Erwin shot off an acoustic round out of his flair gun. And just like that, Gigan, who was high above them, picked up on the signal and immediately swooped down, quickly locating and dispatching the titan with ease.

{WOOOO!} Gigan cheered as he flew back up into the air. **{Now THAT felt good!}**

Pelops giggled. *"I concur. That did feel quite cathartic."*

Gigan was about to take back off into the clouds when Pelops suddenly alerted Gigan to another titan that was currently chasing Sasha nearby where they were flying. Gigan nodded and zipped over to find Sasha being chased by an abnormal that was crawling at her on all fours. However, one beam was all that was needed to stop the titan dead in its tracks. He gave a nod to the grateful potato lover before guiding her back to her group.

Just as Gigan departed from Sash, the girl's instincts began going nuts, screaming that she was being watched by something. She quickened her horse's pace as the feeling grew more and more oppressive. However, the further along she got, the stronger that feeling became, as she passed by small clusters of trees, any one of which could act as the perfect hiding spot for a titan to ambush her, and at one point, she swore she could hear something breathing in one of the tree clusters she passed by. Mikasa noticed Sasha's distress and moved within earshot of her.

"Sasha!" She called, causing her to tell in surprise. "Remember what I told you back in Trost! Fear and panic are unbecoming of a soldier!"

"I'm sorry, Mikasa! I just..." Sasha looked at the trees before continuing. "I feel like we're being watched."

-A-

As Armin rode on his horse, he pondered about how few smoke signals there had been. Granted, Gigan has substantially culled the Titan population the night before, but he would have guessed that there would have been more smoke signals than this. However, he suddenly saw a black signal in the distance and realized that a titan was ignoring the outliers and going for the more densely packed center ranks, which could only mean that an abnormal was approaching. His suspicions were proven correct when Dieter Ness and Luke Siss rode out of a nearby forest with an abnormal hot on their tails.

Eventually, they spread apart and the titan got between both of them. Ness eventually drew his blades, preparing to go for the ankle, which was the only part he'd be able to hit out on the planes. However, before he could jump off of his horse, Gigan swooped down, grabbed the titan with his tail claw, and dragged it along the ground, before chucking it forwards and firing a missile at it, destroying it utterly.

"Show off..." Siss muttered.

"HEY, COME ON! NO KILL STEALING!" Ness jokingly wined.

Gigan chuckled in response, then prepared to take off again when he suddenly stopped. The men below him were confused by his sudden halt, so they also looked up in the same direction, and their eyes widened as they saw a massive, dark figure with enormous wings that blocked the sun. Armin clenched the handle of his horse's lead with all his might. Every fiber of his being urged him to run away as he gazed upon this creature up in the sky. Siss and Ness meanwhile had no idea what they were even looking at, nor what its intentions were, however one look at Gigan's face told them that Gigan knew exactly what they were looking at.

Gigan scowled as he looked up at Battra, the two's glowing eyes locking with each other. Gigan revved up his chainsaw hands, awaiting Battra to come down and try to smite him for his transgressions, but... nothing happened. No matter how long Gigan waited for Battra to make a move, he never did. And this made his angered scowl turn into a cocky smirk.

{What's the matter, Batty?} Gigan taunted, {Aren't you gonna come down and teach me a lesson? I mean, you just saw me defending the humans outside of "their territory"}

Battra stayed silent for only a moment before answering, **[I will not.]**

{What? Don't tell me you're getting cold feet now! Could it be that... } Gigan's smirk then stretched into a far more sinister grin.

{You're afraid of me?}

[You didn't let me finish, Gigan,] Battrra said. [I will not, but they will.]

{They?}

Suddenly, Battrra unleashed a roar that reverberated across the island. Gigan's eye widened as he realized what that was. That was no ordinary roar. **That was an alpha call.**

[I told you I would make you pay if you ever broke our deal, Gigan! Now, this is goodbye.]

With that, Battrra slowly turned around and began to fly away. Gigan was about to go after him when Pelops suddenly appeared on his HUD.

" *GIGAN, KAIJU ARE APPROACHING!*" He said frantically.

{Where are they?}

" *EVERYWHERE!*"

-E-

"Eren! EREN!"

Eren gasped softly before looking to his left and seeing Petra next to him with a concerned look on her face.

"I can tell by the look on your face that something happened," Petra said. "Mind clueing us in on what it was?"

"I... I think I just overheard a conversation Gigan was having with Battrra," Eren said.

"Who's Battrra?"

"He's that monster Hange and I told you all about."

"The one that's apparently controlling all these other monsters out in the world?"

"That's the one."

Petra nodded, "So, what did they say?"

"Something about their deal being broken, and Battra referencing... 'them'? I kind of overheard them while they were in the middle of it."

"So, how come you looked so spooked then?"

"Well... I think I know what Battra meant by 'them,' but I really hope I'm wrong."

Suddenly, their conversation was interrupted when a lookout was approaching them at high speeds, screaming his message to them as he approached.

"CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN! THE RIGHT-WING FODDERS HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY WIPE OUT!" He screamed.

'The right-wing?' Eren thought, his eyes wide with fear. 'That's where Mikasa and Armin were stationed!' He began to worry but calmed down when he remembered that they weren't with the foddors. They were more toward the center, so they wouldn't be picked off that quickly.

"Alright. Petra, relay the message to Erwin that the titans have broken through!" Levi said.

"Sir-" Petra was then suddenly interrupted by the messenger.

"IT WASN'T BY TITANS!"

"WHAT!?" Everyone shouted in shock.

"Then what was it?" Levi asked.

"A GIANT SPIDER! L-LIKE THE ONE FROM TROST! A-A-AND A SWARM OF P-PRAYING MANTISES, EACH OF THEM AT LEAST 15-METERS!"

Eren's voice shook as he realized that his suspicions were correct and that Battrra had summoned more monsters. However, before any of them could contemplate this further, they all heard a loud buzzing above them. The messenger then began screaming as he pointed up at the source of the buzzing. The Levi squad looked up in the direction he was pointing, and saw a swarm of giant praying mantises just above them. Drool dripped from their gaping maws as they gnashed their teeth at them. Everyone struggled to process what they were seeing, however, Levi was the first to act.

"EVERYONE STAY CLOSE, AND KEEP MOVING!" Levi ordered.
"WE CAN'T LET THESE THINGS GET TO THE KID!"

The mantises screamed and began swooping down as the Levi squad +1 veered out of the way of the swarm, which began chasing after them, each of them letting out ear-splitting screeches as they flew close behind them, occasionally snapping their jaws at the horses, which terrified them and caused them to flee faster. The squad counted their blessing that while these things were fast, they didn't seem very smart, and they were able to easily lead them into running into trees and such. However, unlike a titan, which would be stunned long enough to escape, when the mantises crashed into trees, they were able to quickly shrug it off and continue their chase.

"CAPTAIN, THEY'RE GAINING ON US!" Gunther screamed.

"I'M AWARE!" Levi shouted back.

"YOUR ORDERS, SIR!?"

Before Levi could answer, they suddenly looked up and saw black smoke signals coming from all around them. In addition, various

roars and cries of unknown abominations could be heard growing closer and closer, along with the galloping of horses, as everyone simultaneously broke formation so that they could regroup in the center.

As everyone gathered back together, Eren saw that a large chunk of the regiment had been wiped out. And as the ground began to shake, Eren realized the true scale of the threat that Gigan had warned him of.

-G-

Gigan flew over the Scouts as a stampede of Kaiju began approaching them.

{Okay, Pelops, what are we looking at?}

"Region scans indicate signs of singular instances of Baragon, Sea Baragon, Methuselah, and Male Muto, and multiple instances of Kamacuras, Kumonga, Zilla, Gezora, Titan, Giant Condor, Gezora, Ebirah, Juvenile Zilla, and Kamacuras Larva."

{How are we in terms of casualties?}

"A large percentage of Scouts have been killed, however, thanks to you, most of them still remain."

{Alright, give me turret blueprints. I'm going in!}

Gigan dove down into the crowd of monsters chasing after the scouts, blocking their path, as he immediately began hacking his way through all of them. Eren looked back at him, however, Gigan simply roared as the monsters began to swarm him. Eren clenched his eyes shut and kept riding with the scouts while Gigan activated a bright red force field made of charged particles that burned the smaller kaiju on him and knocked off the larger ones.

The two Baragons attempted to pierce the shield with their horns, but the shield wouldn't budge, as Gigan fired a barrage of missiles from his hands, knocking the Baragons away. However, as he was trying to focus on dispatching the Baragons, Varan and Hokmuto disrupted his systems, and then the ground collapsed beneath him, with several Zillas and Kumongas rising from the sinkhole and dogpiling him. Gigan roared and screeched as he tried to fight his way through the seemingly endless hoard of monsters as they all began climbing into the pit to dogpile him.

While Gigan was fending off the larger threats, however, the Scouts still had the matter of the Titans to deal with, as well as a pack of Dynonichous-like Baby Zillas, each of which was slightly faster than the horses. There was even a skinless abnormal that had an oddly feminine body who constantly tried to grab at Eren specifically before falling behind in the crowd of titans once again. Normally, this situation would be considered an utter failure, and they would all be returning to Trost by now. However, in this case, the situation was so dire that they couldn't retreat back home, or else they would fall right into the clutches of the monsters, or even worse, wind up luring them towards the people, who would surely be killed.

Eren clenched his fists tightly as they continued to speed down the path toward Shingonshina. After stabbing one of the Baby Zillas in the face with an ODM blade, Eren finally said what was on his mind.

"CAPTAIN! DOES THIS SITUATION QUALIFY AS MY LIFE BEING IN MORTAL DANGER!?"

Petra, Eld, Gunther, and Oruo's eyes widened as Eren asked him that while both he and Levi recalled the deal Eren made with them: Eren was not permitted to transform into a titan unless his life was in mortal danger. With a heavy sigh, Levi turned to look at Eren.

"At this point, it's too big of a risk to try and fight them head-on!" Levi said, "Just keep your eyes forward!"

Eren nodded and continued to follow them, however, the Female titan grew irritated upon overhearing this. Eren turning into a titan would have made all this so much easier. As she contemplated this, however, she flinched when she suddenly felt a baby Zilla climb on top of her and leap off of her to get ahead of the Scouts. She then saw several other Baby Zillas doing the same, leaping off of the heads of titans in order to cut the Scouts off. However, the scouts were able to counter this by slashing at them as they intercepted them. Even still, they ended up losing a few people to the baby Zillas regardless.

Sasha almost became one of those people as she was surrounded by three of them, however, Mikasa jumped off of her horse and used her ODM gear to cut two of them down, then lift Sasha over to her horse just as the third Baby Zilla killed and began consuming the one Sasha was on. Reiner Braun attempted to fend off three of them as they tried to bump him off of his horse. While swinging at one of them, he ended up with its jaws clamped around his forearm like a beartrap, threatening to bite right through it. Thankfully for him, Bertholdt was there to decapitate the creature, allowing Reiner to break free with his arm still attached to his body.

As they continued to try and outrun the stampede, they were soon cut off by a fully grown Zilla emerging from underground and slamming her claw down in front of them. The Scouts veered out of the way and rode around it as she began to rise from underground, knocking away several of the titans in the process.

Eventually, the Scouts saw the Shingonshina gate growing closer and closer, but they could also hear the nearly 100-meter-tall Zilla approaching them, quickly picking up speed. She began to unhinge her jaws as she approached them, baring her sharp teeth at them, preparing to devour all of them. However, just as she was about to reach them, another Zilla suddenly burst out of the ground and bit into her neck.

Blood filled the maw of the second Zilla as she snapped the neck of her sister in her jaws, before barreling through the titans and Baby

Zillas and approaching the pit where Gigan was slowly rising, missiles, spikes, and lasers flying everywhere as he rose from the pit. The scouts looked back in shock as they continued to ride.

"So, like... I'm not the only one who saw that, right?" Connie asked, everyone else confirming that he wasn't crazy.

A wide smile stretched across Eren's face as he realized that Armin was right. There really were other monsters on their side. Armin meanwhile was utterly speechless, unable to comprehend what was happening. However, the Scouts didn't have time to worry about that, as they were reaching the gate to Shingonshina. The Gate automatically opened for them, then closed just as quickly before the monsters could enter.

Gigan howled with all his might as he decapitated Sea Baragon while plunging his tail claw into the head of Hokmuto, and incinerating an approaching swarm of Kamacuras. He then grunted loudly as he felt a Black Widdow Kumonga jump onto his back and began stabbing at his chassis with its legs. However, the spider was quickly knocked off by a powerful blast of what appeared to be green fire.

Gigan turned around and found his savior in the form of what appeared to be a Zilla, but rather than having dark gray skin with dark blue dorsal spines like her sisters, this Zilla bore dark purple skin, with a lighter shade coloring her underbelly, and her dorsal spines were cyan in color. She also seemed substantially stronger than her sisters. What surprised Gigan most of all though, was that her dorsal spines would sometimes glow green as she fired a green beam of Atomic Breath from her mouth. This unusually colored and substantially more powerful Zilla proceeded to headbutt Baragon away from Gigan before he could attack, then pressed herself against Gigan's back.

[Pleased to meet you,] she said. [My name is Isabella Tatopoulos.]

{Gigan,} he replied. {Any particular reason why you're not trying to dismantle me right now?}

[It's a long story,] she said as she kicked a Kumonga in the face. [For now, let's just leave it at 'I don't follow any alpha, and I have personal reasons to protect humans,' okay?]

{Good enough for me. Right now, I could use the help.}

[Good, now enough talk, time to kick some ass.]

Gigan slashed through a hoard of Kumongas, blocking their web sprays with his force field, then blasted them with his eye beam. Baragon eventually tried to charge in and tackle him, only to get yet another kick to the face, followed by a blast that erupted from the sole of Gigan's foot.

Meanwhile, Isabella jumped onto Methuselah's back and began clawing into it, but his thick hide allowed him to resist her flurry of attacks. Realizing this, she attempted to get under the tanky kaiju and flip him over, only to be smacked aside. Methuselah then charged at Isabella, attempting to skewer her with his horns, however, she was able to hold him back and then unleash her atomic breath right in his face, stunning him and burning his flesh severely. He recoiled in pain and stumbled backward, allowing Isabella to regain her footing and blast him again, knocking him over. She then leaped up to pounce on him, only to be suddenly tackled by Varan, who began biting and scratching her.

Isabella tried to pry Varan off of her, but he had sunk his fangs too deep into her shoulder for her to escape his vice-like bite. Soon, however, she was rescued by Gigan, who fired his beam down upon the flying amphibian, scorching his flesh severely and making him howl in agony. Isabella took advantage of this by grabbing him by the jaws and ripping his head in two. She panted loudly and then looked up and smiled at Gigan.

[I guess this makes us even?] She said.

{Hey, that's just what partners are for.}

Gigan then landed back down and switched to his nano-metal spray hands, shooting out small puffs of Nano-metal clouds which then expanded into massive double mazer turrets which each fired at the surrounding monsters, dispersing the crowd and allowing Gigan and Isabella to continue to thin the numbers. However, even with the two working side by side, the monsters just kept coming. Gigan tried to even the odds by summoning even more mazer turrets with his Nano-Metal spray hands, however, these turrets were dismantled by the Kumongas, who blocked up the blasters with their webbing, allowing Baragon and Methuselah to smash them to bits.

[Isn't there some way we can lure them out of here?!] Isabella asked as she shook off a bunch of abnormal titans crawling all over her.

{I have an O.R.C.A. built into me, but it won't help,} Gigan replied as he shotgun blasted multiple Giant Condors. **{We can't get them out of here without also creating an opening for them to waltz right back in!}**

[What if we used your Nano-Metal to block them out again?] Isabella asked as she tail-whipped a Zilla in the face.

{Wait... that could work!} Gigan exclaimed, before taking to the skies again. **{Quick, cover your ears!}**

[Don't have to. The O.R.C.A. simulates an alpha call, and as we already established, I don't respond to those!]

{How do you know about that?}

[Again, long story, no time, just go!]

Gigan nodded and activated his built-in O.R.C.A. A low, rumbling hum reverberated from his chest and he began soaring through the air, with all the monsters following him baring all the Abnormal Titans,

which Isabella quickly dispatched before following Gigan. The two reached the wall after a short amount of time, and Gigan silently apologized to the humans for what he was about to do before he and Isabella blasted a massive hole into the wall, which Gigan then lead all the Kaiju through, heading towards the ocean.

While Isabella stayed behind to guard the gap, she noticed that on both sides of the hole, massive, skinless humanoids stood within the cracked walls like sentinels. Curious, she approached the titan, crouched down, and gently poked it with her claw. The sudden prod caused the titan to suddenly awaken and the section of the wall began to crumble around it, revealing its full form. Isabella jumped back in surprise, but fairly easily dispatched the much smaller monster.

As steam billowed off of the titan's corpse, she crouched down next to it and observed it, wondering why a titan would be inside the walls. While she was distracted by the wall titan, though, the feminine abnormal, who was able to ignore the O.R.C.A., snuck past them and eventually reached Shingonshina's gate, where she took a knee as steam began to billow out of the back of her neck.

Meanwhile, Gigan had reached the ocean, and made sure all the Kaiju were there and accounted for. After doing a headcount, he slowly turned to leave, but then he thought back to what happened to the Scouts he wasn't fast enough to save. All the people that were crushed, burned, devoured, and more. Why did they have to die, while their killers get to live? Gigan slowly turned around and began powering up his eye beam...

"Gigan..." Pelops growled like an angry parent.

{What?!} Gigan groaned like a rebellious teenager.

"Don't give me that, mister!" Pelops scolded. "You needed Isabella's help to deal with all these monsters, and even then you two couldn't kill all of them! Plus, if you attack them, it will break them out of the effects of the O.R.C.A.! Just leave them, it's not worth the trouble."

{But they-}

"Gigan, listen to me," he interrupted. "You are not a god. You have limits just like everyone and everything else. Today, you have hit that limit, and you were lucky to get out of it alive. Don't try to push your luck, just leave them be."

Gigan snarled and continued to change his beam, but ultimately conceded and turned away, returning to the walls so that he could mend them.

-E-

The sun began setting on this hectic day, as the Scouts settled down within Shingonshina. Outside of a long abandoned stable, the Scouts' horses were all standing together, lined up outside with water and food troughs in front of them. Ness was brushing his horse's mane to soothe her while trying to shake off the mortal terror he felt when the Scouts were being chased down by the kaiju stampede. Never before in his life had he ever experienced anything like this, and even after facing off against so many titans and losing some close friends to them, nothing could have prepared him for the horrors he had experienced today.

Meanwhile, inside an abandoned building nearby, the rest of the Scouts were recovering from the attack. Many of the wounded were being treated, and the rest were eating their rations and trying to relax their nerves. Moblit Berner stood in the corner and chugged an entire bottle of hard whiskey in an attempt to repress his lingering terror, but doing little to ease his nerves. Krista Lens was going around, attending to the wounded. She took a knee next to Reiner Braun and poured some medicine onto his wounded arm, which had been in the vice-like jaws of a baby Zilla previously. Ymir watched Krista clean his wound with a hint of jealousy, but she repressed it for the time being.

Eren, Armin, Sasha, and Mikasa were sitting together, as usual, Mikasa sitting down next to Sasha and placing a hand on her

shoulder while she was trembling with fear. Sasha ran her fingers through her hair and quietly muttered to herself, before Mikasa opened her mouth to give Sasha some more of her "advice," when suddenly Sasha jumped up and hugged her, tears streaming down her cheeks. Mikasa sighed softly and hugged her tenderly as Sasha sobbed softly over her shoulder.

"You're welcome..." Mikasa whispered into her ear.

While the two hugged each other, Eren and Armin were talking about their recent experience, Eren surprisingly happy about it all.

"Isn't this great, Armin?" Eren asked while patting him on the back. "You were right! Gigan wasn't the only one! We really do have a chance against the monsters!"

"I didn't expect to be right..." Armin muttered.

"What was that?"

"Ah- I said... y-yeah! This is great!" Armin chuckled awkwardly while Eren gave him a suspicious look. Armin quickly changed the subject to relieve the awkward aura he was giving off.

"So, why did you ask Captain Levi if your life was in danger?" Armin asked

"It's part of his duty when keeping watch over me," he answered. "I'm not allowed to transform unless my life is in jeopardy. But in this case, I wasn't allowed to, probably because he worried that I would be killed if I tried to fight them."

"I see. By the way, did you learn anything new about your powers?"

"Well, we learned one thing. A week before you guys joined, we found out that I can't transform unless I have a specific goal in mind, like when I wanted to fight the Kumonga, or save you guys from the cannons."

"W-wait, what's a 'Kumonga'?"

"Oh yeah, Gigan told us that that's the name of the giant spiders."

While they were talking, one of the higher-ups called out to the scouts and told everyone who was able to come with him, because Erwin had an announcement to make. The majority of the scouts followed him, with a few people staying behind. Namely, Krista and Marco elected to stay behind to treat the severely wounded. As the Scouts followed the leader, with Hange and Mike also leading them, Eren noticed Mikasa reach out for Sasha's hand, but nervously pull it away at the last second. He smiled as he saw this, happy in knowing that she really wouldn't have to worry about him anymore.

Erwin stood before them in the town center, standing in front of the destroyed town center fountain. The wind blew through the air, making his cape flow to one side as he addressed the scouts with his arms folded behind his back.

"It should go without saying that today's attack was an unforeseen and catastrophic turn of events," he began. "Hundreds of good men and women died fighting against horrors that we have never seen before. Horrors that, as it stands, we are ill-equipped to fight against. However, let it never be said that today was a failure. Far from it."

The crowd began muttering amongst each other in confusion before Erwin continued.

"Despite the drastic loss of life, and despite all odds being against us, we have succeeded in reaching Shingonshina district, a feat worth celebrating," he said, lifting the spirits of the Scouts. "Our work is far from over, but for now, we rest. Just south of here, we found multiple inns that we will be able to utilize as makeshift barracks for tonight. Petra Rall, Eld Jinn, and Oruo Bozard shall show you all to your sleeping quarters. Dismissed." Erwin ended his announcement with a salute, to which the scouts returned before being escorted to their quarters.

-A-

It was late at night. Everything was silent, and everyone in Shingonshina was sound asleep, even captain Levi. Everyone except for Reiner and Bertholdt. The two snuck through the abandoned streets of Shingonshina until they reached the patched gate, where they saw Annie waiting for them, leaning against a wall with her arms crossed.

"Took you two long enough," she said.

"We had to make sure everyone was asleep first," Bertholdt replied.

Annie nodded. "I'm guessing plans have changed?"

"Right," Reiner replied. "Now that there are more kaiju on the island than just Titans, we're gonna have to speed things up."

"So what do you suggest we do?" Annie asked.

"They're about to reach the cellar. If they get to it, then they'll have access to whatever information Grisha had. We need to make sure they don't get down there. So, while we're approaching the cellar, we need you to make a distraction in your titan form. Once we get whatever's down there, we'll set off a smoke signal, and then you grab Eren and come to us. Then Bert will transform and we can get out of here."

Annie pinched her brow. "Okay, two problems with that. One: What happens if someone catches you? Especially Mikasa or Levi. And two: Even if this plan worked, where would we go? Gigan and that weird super Zilla would be able to catch us, assuming we don't just get eaten out there!"

As the group continued to discuss their plan and work out the kinks in it, a hooded figure watched from above. Suddenly, the three heard ODM gear shoot off as the figure in Scout garb blasted off toward the other scouts.

"I thought you said everyone was asleep," Annie said condescendingly.

"Oh, shut up, Annie," Reiner groaned.

"We don't have ODM," Bertholdt said. "We'll never be able to catch up with him!"

"Not as humans we won't," Annie said as she stepped in front of them and bit her hand.

As the figure zoomed through the air, he heard lightning clap down behind him. He looked back and saw the Female Titan charging out of a cloud of smoke at high speed, the ground rumbling beneath her as she charged after him. Reiner and Bertholdt meanwhile began running through the streets to find a place to hide and come up with a plan. As the Female titan chased the cloaked man, he suddenly pulled a flair gun out, loaded it, and then covered his ear as he raised it up into the air and fired it. The flair produced a noise so loud that it awoke all the Scouts several miles away.

Upon awakening, Sasha was the first to notice the ground shaking, and informed everyone in her inn that somehow, a 15-meter-Titan had gotten inside Shingonshina and was rapidly approaching. As such, her Inn was the first to arm themselves and get into a fighting formation, with the other two soon to follow. They eventually saw the hooded Scout turn the corner and approach them, with Annie crashing into a building before recovering and chasing after him. However, once she saw that the Scouts were waiting for her, she turned around and fled in the opposite direction, with several scouts giving chase while Levi came down to check on the hooded Scout. He pulled the hood back, only to reveal that it was none other than Erwin Smith. Levi wasn't all that surprised to see him, as Erwin grappled to the top of a nearby roof to tell Hange, Mike, and Levi about what he had discovered.

Meanwhile, Jean, Eren, Armin, Mikasa, Sasha, Petra, Oruo, Eld, and Gunther were all chasing after Annie. She looked back and noticed

Eren in the group of people chasing her, and her eyes narrowed before she turned and began trying to juke them. Armin noticed her change in facial expression, but couldn't be sure of what it meant just yet. As the group continued to chase after Annie, she kept maneuvering around the city. Eventually, the group had to stop and come up with a different strategy, lest they run out of fuel. Jean, Eld, and Sasha continued to follow her to keep her distracted, while the rest began coming up with a plan.

"I suggest we split up and surround her," Gunther said. "Then she'll have nowhere to turn, and we can all go in for the kill."

"Hold on, that might not be a good idea," Armin replied.

"And just who gave you the authority to speak up, runt?" Oruo said as he shoved his face up in Armin's. "You'd better have a good reason to question the judgment of the Levi squad."

A sudden smack to the back of the head caused Oruo to bite his tongue in the middle of speaking.

"Could you not be such a jackass for five minutes?" Petra groaned, before turning to Armin with a more inquisitive look on her face.

"What makes you think that's a bad idea, Armin?"

"Well, it's not so much that it's a bad idea on paper, but more that I think that's what she wants us to do," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I noticed that while we were chasing her, she turned around, and her expression changed. It was only then that she started moving in seemingly random patterns," he explained. "I think she might be trying to get to one of us in particular."

Petra placed a finger on her chin as she recalled the moment Armin was talking about. "Now that you mention it, I saw that too."

"Yeah, me too," Eren said. "But who do you think it is?"

"I'm not sure, but if I had to guess, it would probably be you."

"M-me?!" Eren's eyes widened before Mikasa chimed in.

"He has a point. I remember her being in the crowd of titans, and I noticed that she was specifically trying to grab you whenever she got close," she said.

"So, what do we do then?" Mikasa asked.

"I have an idea. It might sound dumb, but it's the best I've got," Armin said. "We go with Gunther's idea, but we make sure to keep our hoods on and don't say a word. If she is trying to capture Eren, she likely won't risk killing him accidentally if she can't tell who's who."

"That's a really good idea, Armin," Gunther said.

"Frankly, I'd say it's brilliant!" Petra applauded.

Oruo scoffed. "I could have come up with that, honestly."

"And yet you didn't because...?" Petra eyed Oruo with an eyebrow raised as Oruo began making up some vague, nonsensical explanation.

Eren patted Armin on the back and smiled at him. "Way to go, Armin," he said.

After discussing who would be where everyone blasted off to their positions.

Meanwhile, Jean gritted his teeth in frustration as Annie rounded yet another corner. Eld attempted to cut her off and slice out her eyes, only for Annie to duck underneath him and roll out of the way, before hopping back to her feet and continuing to flee. However, while running, five smoke signals suddenly appeared around her, two to her left, two to her right, and one in front of her. Then, five scouts

jumped out of the smoke, all veiled in their cloaks as they jumped toward her. Annie tried to grab at them so that she could check who was who, but she was having a hard time catching any of them, and the only one she could grab shredded right through her hand. Eventually, she saw two of them reach her eyes and cut them out, causing her to wail in pain as steam billowed out of both.

Annie tried to run, but Gunther and Armin proceeded to cut out the Achilles heels, bringing her to the ground, then Oruo and Petra shredded her shoulders, and Mikasa took out her Elbows. With all means of defending herself gone, Eren swooped down to deal the finishing blow to her naip, only for his blades to shatter on impact, as a blue crystal had formed around it. Eren gasped in shock before landing on a nearby building.

"EREN! WHAT HAPPENED!?" Petra called, making Armin tense up.

"MA'AM, THE FEMALE TITAN HAS SOME SORT OF ARMOR AROUND HER NAIP!" He called back to her.

"WHAT!?" Jean shouted. "THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE! SHE DIDN'T HAVE ARMOR THERE WHILE WE WERE CHASING HER!"

While the Scouts tried to figure out what to do next, Annie suddenly raised her arm and snatched Eren right off of the roof he was on top of. Armin screamed while Mikasa tried to go in and rescue him, only for Annie to harden the back of her hand, preventing Mikasa from cutting it. Mikasa was shocked by this, but then looked up and saw that Annie had already regenerated one eye.

Annie tried to grab Mikasa, but before she could, Eren managed to pull one arm out of her grip and sink his teeth into his hand, causing him to explode out of her grip and transform into a titan. Annie stood up and got into a combative stance which Armin, Jean, Sasha, and especially Mikasa all found hauntingly familiar, while Eren lifted up a wooden beam to use as a weapon. After a momentary standoff, Eren was the first to strike, swinging the beam with all his might, which Annie blocked by hardening her arm and covering her face, causing

it to break on impact. Eren, unphased, rammed the splintered end into her stomach and charged forwards, causing her to crash into a nearby house.

The group then saw Erwin and Levi land next to them while Hange's crew began setting up nets and STCWs (Special Target Capture Weapons). Erwin came to them with news about what he had discovered about the Female Titan, and it wasn't good.

"While spying on Reiner and Bertholdt as they snuck out of their Inn, I have discovered that Annie Leonheart is the Female Titan," Erwin said. Armin's heart sank at that news. "Furthermore, I have reason to believe that Bertholdt and Reiner are the Armored and Colossal Titans. Which ones each of them are, I am currently unsure."

Armin nervously looked back at Eren and Annie as they continued to duke it out. Eren grabbed Annie by the legs and threw her into an old church, causing it to crumble instantly, and then ran up to her to continue beating on her, but as soon as he approached her, he received a hardened kick to the face which caused him to stumble into a nearby house.

-E-

Annie prepared to attack Eren again, only to suddenly have her shoulder sliced by Mina and Mylius, who both landed next to Eren as he climbed out of the rubble. Mina and Mylius then climbed onto his shoulders while Eren took a battle stance.

"What's the plan, big guy?" Mina asked.

"Go... for... limbs..." Eren replied.

"Gotcha," Mylius replied. The two then hopped off and zipped towards Annie while Eren charged at her and socked her right in the jaw.

Annie stumbled but cracked her jaw back into place. She tried hardening her ankles and knees so that they couldn't be cut by Mina, who was zipping around them, only for Eren to knee her in the gut while Mylius tried going for her naip, only to achieve the same results that Eren did. Annie then managed to fend Eren off by hardening her fists and growing spikes out of her knuckles, before punching Eren repeatedly until his titan was too mangled to keep holding onto her. Annie then pummeled Eren's face until it was left a steaming pulp.

She then reached down, about to rip Eren's head off and grab him out of his naip, but suddenly she was attacked by Armin, Mina, and Mylius, who all tried to cut her down to size together. Thoroughly done with all of them at this point, Annie proceeded to roundhouse kick Mina out of the sky, crippling her, before finishing her off by stomping on her. Mylius, enraged, tried to cut through the front of her neck, only to be smashed with a clap, and finally, she grabbed Armin, unhinged her jaws, and swallowed him whole.

Eren had watched the whole thing, but with his body unable to move, all he could do was watch as she devoured his childhood best friend. His hands shook violently as he watched her run away, until his eyes rolled into the back of its head as it began to rise from the rubble.

-e-

8 years ago...

"Eren! Check this out!" Armin called as he ran up to Eren, who turned his head to the side and saw him running towards him.

Eren noticed that Armin had a large book in his hands. He stopped in front of him and then knelt down in front of him.

"What's with all that shouting?" Eren complained.

"Sorry! It's just that I found a book my grandpa keeps hidden away," Armin said. "It's about the outside world! Can you believe it?"

"I really hope this is your idea of a joke! Stuff about the outside is illegal!"

"Trust me, you'll change your mind once you know what's out there!" Armin interrupted. "For example, this book says that the world is covered with salty water so deep you can't reach the bottom! There's a name for it too! It's called 'the ocean'!"

"Like salty for real?" Armin nodded, prompting Eren to scoff. "Come on, if something as valuable as salt was just floating around in the water, merchants would have scooped it all out ages ago."

"That's the thing! It never runs out! It's just that big!" Armin then opened the book, showing Eren various pictures taken inside of it. "And there's so much more than salt! There's water that burns like fire, fields of ice, giant rocks that take days to climb, vast expanses of sand! Imagine how huge the outside world must be!"

Eren smiled as he looked down at all the pictures in the book. "It does sound really neat," he said as he thought of what it would be like to venture through all of that, and what else could be out there waiting to be explored.

"Okay, you need to promise on your life not to tell anyone this," Armin pleaded quietly. "But... my parents are gonna sneak out of the walls tonight."

Eren's eyes widened with excitement. "They'll know what it's like firsthand!"

"Hey, Eren?"

Eren looked into Armin's eyes.

"We should do this ourselves one day," he said. "We can have adventures, just like the guy who wrote this book."

A bright smile stretched across Eren's face and he nodded, his cheeks reddening slightly. "I'd like that."

-E-

Today...

" Kill... I'll kill you... I'll kill all of you... every last one..."

Eren's body suddenly began heating up more and more. Molten cracks formed all over him, and steam billowed off of his body. Eren began screaming in abject fury, startling the female titan as he began charging toward her. She hardened her naip once again as she tried to run away, but howled in agony as his arm burst through her torso, causing all of her internal fluids, as well as the unconscious Armin, to flow out of her.

Eren then lifted her over his head, shoved his other arm into her, and effortlessly ripped her in half. He roared and chunked the legs to the side in a fit of rage, before looking down at Annie as she desperately tried to crawl away. She hardened her entire back so that Eren couldn't hurt her, but then felt the hardening collapse as Eren stomped on her back, then knelt down and punched the back of her neck, shattering it with one hit.

Scouts crowded around Eren from the rooftops as they watched him rip the female titan to pieces, before eventually grabbing Annie out of her naip and lifting her up to his face. He noticed tears streaming down her cheeks as she stared at him with wide tear-filled eyes. She seemed remorseful. Like she was silently apologizing for everything that she had done and begging for her life.

But where was this remorse when she crushed Mina? Where were these tears when she turned Mylius into a red stain on her hands? No. She didn't deserve forgiveness. She deserved exactly what she did to Armin to be done to her tenfold. He lifted her up to his mouth, and bit her in half, swallowing both halves of her.

Everyone watching this was simultaneously shocked and terrified, their eyes widening further when Eren suddenly went limp as a massive blast of steam erupted from his body, engulfing the entire area. Eren's titan then collapsed as everyone saw her body fall out of the back of the neck.

When the steam cleared, the Scouts saw what they assumed to be Eren lying face down, completely unconscious. Mikasa scrambled down to check on her while Sasha went to wake up Armin. Upon waking up, Armin saw the evaporating titan body and ran to go see if Eren was okay, but was dumbfounded when he saw how much she had changed.

Eren slowly opened her eyes and saw Armin, Mikasa, and Sasha all standing over her, all in various states of shock. Mikasa's hands trembling, Armin's voice shaking, and Sasha's jaw hanging open. Eren asked them what was wrong in a voice that wasn't familiar to them, but wasn't unfamiliar either, before Sasha ran to find a piece of broken glass, and came back with one clear enough to show people's reflections. Eren's eyes squinted a bit before widening as she looked at her reflection, finding the face of not the boy she had grown familiar with... but a girl with the same eye color, hair color, and skin color as the boy who was usually in the mirror, but with changes in features that were clearly indicating that something had changed drastically.

"W-wha- I- how did- I ca-" Eren tried again and again to start a sentence, but she couldn't get a single word out.

Mikasa held her hand as she began hyperventilating while Armin got behind her and rubbed her shoulders gently. However, while they were trying to calm Eren down, Sasha suddenly placed her head on the ground and listened carefully. Her eyes widened as she realized that there was something else coming, but before she could say what, a thunderclap caught them all by surprise. They all looked up and saw the Colossal Titan rising from the ground nearby, steam billowing off of his body with a look of intense hatred plastered on his face. Everyone was horrified to see that the Colossal Titan was

seemingly larger than before. Instead of 60-meters-tall like before, the Colossal Titan now stood at a towering 200-meters-tall. Additionally, the Armored Titan had appeared just down the street, baring an equally angry expression.

The trio carried Eren onto a nearby rooftop while the scouts mobilized on the Armored and Colossal Titan. Eren tried to join the fight, but found that she was too exhausted to transform again, and she didn't know why. That's when Levi and his squad landed next to him.

"Who's the new girl?" He asked. "Shingonshina is supposed to be uninhabited."

"She's not new," Armin said. "As crazy as it seems... this is Eren!"

Levi raised an eyebrow. "What?"

"I believe this was caused by him- well, **her** eating Annie," Mikasa said, causing Eren's eyes to widen in shock.

Eren had no recollection of eating Annie... until she remembered the last few minutes before waking up. She remembered the Female Titan killing Mina and Mylius, then her eating Mikasa, which caused her to snap and go into a berserk state, and then she tore apart the Female Titan and saw that Annie was controlling it... and then she ate her. Eren placed a hand over her eye and began trembling as these memories came back to her. Tears welled up in her eyes as the weight of all of this finally came crashing down onto her. Her quiet sobbing drowned out the discussion Levi, the squad, and Armin were having, and her mental distress prevented her from feeling the warmth of Mikasa trying to comfort her.

However, as she tried to comprehend all of this, the Armored Titan began approaching them, the ground rumbling with each step he took. Levi immediately drew his blades and readied himself for battle.

"Alert, Gunther, Braus, make sure the brat is safe," he ordered. "The rest of you are with me!" He then looked down at Eren. "And you, pull yourself together. We're going to get through this." With that, Levi and the others took off, with Armin, Gunther and Sasha taking her somewhere safer.

-B-

Earlier...

Reiner and Bertholdt had finally regained their ODM Gear, and we're now able to get to a better vantage point to observe Annie. Upon arriving, they found that she had just defeated Eren and was about to take his head off, when she started being pestered by the scouts.

"W-we need to help her!" Bertholdt said, but Reiner held him back.

"No need, she's got this under control," he said. "Look."

Bertholdt looked back and saw Annie masterfully dispatch one of them with a single kick, sending the scout tumbling to the ground. Now unable to get back up, she was finished off by a titan-sized stomp. Bertholdt sighed in relief as Annie proceeded to take out the other two with ease.

"See? What did I tell you? She's a natural!" Reiner said. "Now come on, we need to find that cellar."

However, before the two could leave, they were stopped in their tracks by a bone-chilling howl that echoed across the city. The entire Scout regiment had arrived on the scene at this point, and they, as well as Bertholdt and Reiner, were looking at a scene straight out of a horror film, where Eren had entered a state never before seen by any titan shifter before him and was using it to absolutely eviscerate Annie. Bertholdt and Reiner watched in terror as their friend and ally was being torn to shreds by the titan. Then, to their even greater horror, they watched as Eren tore Annie out of her titan before she had time to crystalize herself, and devoured her whole.

Bertholdt fell to his knees. He didn't know what to do now. Annie, the girl he had fallen in love with over the course of these past several years, was dead. He wanted to scream, to cry, to do something, anything, but he couldn't.

Eventually, the scouts found them. Connie, Nac, Ness, Ymir, Krista, Marco, and more had them all surrounded. Connie was in denial, begging them to tell him that there was some misunderstanding and that Erwin didn't actually see them. Marco was trying his best to understand why they would do what they did. Ness demanded that they surrender right now. But Bertholdt didn't care. He only had one thing he could say, and with all his might, he said it.

"ANNIEEEEE!" Bertholdt screamed, tears streaming down his face as he sank his teeth deep into his hands.

The Scouts scattered as a massive explosion engulfed Bertholdt, and from the smoke arose the Colossal Titan, now no longer held back by Bertholdt's weak will and inhibitions. With nothing left to lose, Bertholdt unleashed the full height and power that the Colossal Titan was able to achieve.

As the Scouts began to close in on the titan, he unleashed a roar so loud that it caused a massive shockwave that rippled through the city, decimating any houses in its path. The scouts that went in to fight him soon found themselves scattering for their lives every time the Colossal Titan opened his mouth. The rage Bertholdt felt could not be contained, and from within his titan, he would just continue to scream and scream and scream, and with each holler of emotional agony, the Colossal Titan would unleash another sonic cry that would rumble the entire island.

-Author's notes-

I had a lot of fun writing both this and the next episode. Also, in the middle of writing it, I ended up taking a drastically different turn. This chapter was originally going to just be the Female Titan Arc, but Kamacuras and Baragon were messing

everything up, and eventually a regular Zilla appeared to fight Bertholdt. However, this I feel makes for a much more unique experience.

Anyway, time for reviews

Alph4Scorpion180: "Really enjoying your chapters! Can't wait for the next one!"

Thank you so much for the kind words.

Godzillaboy2021: "This leviathan at the end sounds like Shin Godzilla. He's the only incarnation with humanoid minions on the end of his tail."

You're right to assume that, however this isn't just Shin Godzilla, but a version of Godzilla that can be considered Shin Godzilla's "8th form" of sorts. Yes, I said 8th form.

Guest account: "Oh Battra done fucked up Godzilla's awake and he be pissed"

And for a reason. The two share some history in this series.

To you from 20,000 years ago

-E-

Scouts crowded around Eren from the rooftops as they watched him rip the female titan to pieces, before eventually grabbing Annie out of her naip and lifting her up to his face. He noticed tears streaming down her cheeks as she stared at him with wide tear-filled eyes. She seemed remorseful. Like she was silently apologizing for everything that she had done and begging for her life.

But where was this remorse when she crushed Mina? Where were these tears when she turned Mylius into a red stain on her hands? No. She didn't deserve forgiveness. She deserved exactly what she did to Armin to be done to her tenfold. He lifted her up to his mouth, and bit her in half, swallowing both halves of her.

-A-

Just as soon as the world went dark for Annie, she felt herself falling into a body of water. Her legs were somehow reconnected to her body, and she was somehow able to breathe perfectly fine, but she couldn't move no matter how hard she tried. All she could do was float in place in utter silence, completely alone. A single tear rolled down her face as she recalled her father's last words to her before she left.

" Stand your ground."

And yet, she didn't. She cracked under pressure, made irrational decisions in the face of insurmountable adversity, and now she was dead, and would never be able to see her father again. She died a monster and a failure.

Suddenly, however, she felt herself falling again. This time, she landed on a floor of sand. She looked around and found that she

was in a desert at night, with a constant aurora borealis in the sky. There was also a constant, ambient blue light that illuminated her surroundings. She gently scooped up a handful of sand and allowed it to slip through her fingers as she pondered where she was and how she got there. While pondering this, however, she heard something over by the tree. It sounded like wood scratching against wood in a repetitive motion, accompanied by the sound of a woman humming some song she had never heard before.

Annie cautiously approached the tree, unsure of what she would find there. Upon arriving, she saw a pile of thin, dull blue wooden slabs stacked up next to a woman. This woman bore blonde, armpit-length hair, sapphire blue eyes, peach skin, and scars underneath her eyes similar to those of a titan shifter. Shackles were bound to her wrists and ankles, keeping her in a kneeling position as she carved a stick figure with a crown and a beard into a tiny slab of blue wood using a chisel, also made of dull, blue wood. Behind her was another girl, this one unshackled and seemingly a tad younger, with slightly paler skin, black, shoulder-length hair, and light blue eyes, herself also bearing titan shifter scars. The black-haired girl turned around to speak to the other girl, however upon noticing Annie, her eyes widened and she rapidly tapped on her friend's shoulder, alerting her to her presence, which prompted her to stare in shock as well.

" Um... Hello...?" Annie greeted while rubbing the back of her head.

" ANNIE!?" They both exclaimed simultaneously. That creeped Annie out.

" How do you know my name?" she asked, an eyebrow raised.

The girl on her knees cleared her throat and began to explain, "S-sorry. Let's start over. I'm Ymir Fritz," she said. She then gestured to the woman behind her. "This is my friend, former queen Frieda Reiss. I'd say it's a pleasure to meet you, but..." Ymir was suddenly elbowed in the ribs by Frieda.

" Ymir! Be more cordial! The girl was just eaten alive, for heaven's sake!" Frieda chastised.

" Frieda, you and I both saw what she did to those scouts," Ymir retorted. "Eren had every right to eat her."

' What is happening?' Annie thought.

" That's beside the point, Ymir!"

" It's **exactly** the point, Frieda! She's a murderer! She doesn't deserve our pity!"

However, Frieda and Ymir's bickering was interrupted by the subject of their argument.

" Wait, you're **the** Ymir?" Annie asked. "As in, **the Goddess Ymir** ?"

Ymir winced as she heard that name. "Don't call me that..."

" And you," Annie pointed at Frieda. "You're the former queen of the walls, right? So you're **the Founding Titan**? "

Frieda fiddled with her hair. "I **was** the Founding Titan until Grisha Jaeger ate me, and then had his son, Eren Jaeger, eat him. Now I'm just Frieda. I don't really have anything special anymore."

" That's not true," Ymir said. "You have me to grant you wishes."

Annie's eyes widened. "Wishes?"

"Hugh? Oh, yeah, I'm forced to obey the will of the royal family no matter what. Basically, I'm like their own personal genie, but with more restrictions, no wish limit, and I can't prank them, even when I really want to."

Annie's eyes widened as she came up with a plan. "So, then you can help Bertholdt and Reiner capture Eren?"

Ymir raised an eyebrow. "How?"

"What do you mean, 'how'?" Annie asked. "You're Ymir the Founder! You can do anything!"

Ymir chuckled a bit. "Yeah, Frieda thought the same thing." She then looked back up at Annie. "Look, there's a lot of things I can't do, either because I'm physically incapable, or because Battra doesn't want me to. And since Battra is in control of this entire dimension, his will supersedes anyone else's, royal blood or not."

Annie looked around. "Where are we, anyway?"

"This is the Paths, an alternate dimension that Battra created after Julian and his cronies killed and ate me, not in that order, forsaking humanity in the process."

"If this is your prison, then why am I here? And for that matter, why is she here?" Annie asked as she gestured to Frieda.

"Well, you being here actually confirms a theory I developed after Grisha ate Eren," Frieda said. "My theory is that any Titan shifter that is eaten by another Titan shifter gets sent here after being eaten."

Annie found this explanation acceptable enough. However, this left her with yet another question.

"How did you know I was eaten by another Titan shifter?" She asked.

"The same way that we knew your name," Ymir then placed a hand on the glowing tree next to her and Frieda, and suddenly, a holographic screen appeared before them, which showed a first-person view of Eren only a second after devouring Annie. She then dragged her finger across it slowly, showing the entire fight playing out from Eren's perspective. Frieda meanwhile pulled up a second screen showing the fight from Annie's perspective. Annie was astounded by this, then watched as the screens blipped away.

" Within paths, you can see the entire history of every titan power," Ymir explained. "That of course includes my own."

" What about the future?" Annie asked.

" Only the Attack titan power can see the future, for as useful as that is."

Annie was amazed by this but tried to keep her composure. "Well, back on topic, is there any way you can help my allies?"

" Not physically, if that's what you mean. Not unless they came in physical contact with a person of royal blood, or they have royal blood."

" I know someone with royal blood that we all came in contact with," Annie said, catching Frieda's attention. Ymir's eyes then widened as she remembered what Annie was talking about.

" OHHHH! You mean Zeke?" She asked.

" Okay, seriously, how long have you been going through our memories?"

" I've been trapped in here for 20,000 years," Ymir growled. "I have nothing else to do but make wooden sculptures, watch the shifters' memories, and occasionally follow the orders of people I almost always hate!"

Frieda placed a hand on Ymir's shoulder while Annie simply brought it back to the subject of Reiner and Bertholdt. After calming down, Ymir explained that even after touching a shifter, she could only affect their minds, and not their bodies.

" I can make them aware of things they didn't know before, or even tell them to do or say certain things, but only 1. If Frieda asks me to, and 2. If Battra allows me to." Ymir then looked down at her hands. "I

hate doing it, but if someone with royal blood commands it, and Battra allows it, I don't really have a choice."

" Can you tell them that Eren is the coordinate, then?"

Frieda and Ymir looked to each other, then back at Annie. "What would that accomplish?" Ymir asked.

" Well, it will allow them to complete the mission," she said. "They can take the coordinate back to Marley, have someone more loyal to us eat him, then-"

" -initiate the rumbling yourselves and use it to fight the kaiju," Ymir interrupted. "I know that. What I mean is, what do you think telling them that Eren is the coordinate will accomplish?"

" What do you mean?"

" Think of this from their perspective: they just watched their friend get eaten right in front of them. Not only that, but to Bertholdt, you weren't just his friend, you were the girl he loved."

Annie's expression changed slightly upon being told about Bertholdt's crush, not necessarily out of embarrassment, but more confusion at the fact that he'd find her attractive.

" They are not gonna be thinking clearly after that. Even if I do tell them, they probably won't care. Maybe Reiner would, but Bertholdt definitely wouldn't. Believe me, I would know."

" Damn it..."

Frieda raised an eyebrow as she glanced down at Ymir.

" No, Frieda, I didn't love Gordon!" Ymir corrected. "I can just relate to how Bertholdt probably feels right now."

" And yet you couldn't show Annie any sympathy when she arrived, despite her being eaten alive just like you were?" Frieda retorted.

" I said I can relate, not that I approve of them committing fucking genocide on the other half of mankind."

As Frieda and Ymir began to bicker once again, Annie took a seat on the soft, cool sand. She looked down at the small pieces of wood Ymir was carving into. She saw on them stick figures of kings, queens, clowns, and cards covered in various shapes. Spades, hearts, what looked like either clovers or clubs, and diamonds. Then, Annie realized that she was making a poker deck. Annie couldn't help but be impressed by Ymir's ingenuity, craftsmanship, and resourcefulness.

1 minute later...

" Got any 3s?" Frieda asked.

" Wait, I thought we were playing poker," Ymir replied.

Frieda placed her head in her palm. "I already told you, Frieda, I don't know how to play poker."

*" You had over forty thousand years to learn, and you **still** don't know poker?"*

" Tuche," Frieda shrugged.

" Hey! Ymir!" Annie called, prompting Ymir to turn around, revealing her cards to Frieda by accident.

" Yeah?"

" How come after spending weeks, it seems like things are only just now starting to pick up steam outside in the real world?"

" Oh, looks like you've already noticed how fucked up time is in Paths," Ymir replied with a bitter chuckle.

" What do you mean by that?"

" A year in here translates to about an hour in the real world. I'd say maybe a minute or two have passed outside. If I had to guess, Battrra probably made Paths that way on purpose to make me go insane."

" Did it work?" Annie asked.

" A little bit at first, but that was only because the first founding titans with royal blood were Julian Reiss and his fucked up daughters," Ymir remarked. "Ever since Frieda arrived though, I must say, I've felt quite sane ever since."

" Julian Reiss? Do you mean Fritz, the first king?"

" No, I mean Julian Reiss. He just changed his name to Fritz because he lusted for me so much that he centered his entire life around me." Ymir then shuddered, recalling the lengths of Julian's depravity. Frieda herself gagged at the thought, as she had to live with his memories for several years when she was alive.

" Care to elaborate-"

" NO!" They both shouted in unison.

6 minutes later...

Ymir slapped a 4 of diamonds down onto a pile and laughed victoriously, her hand now empty of any cards, as she knelt across from Frieda, who had seven clutched in her hands.

" I WIN AGAIN!" Ymir taunted. Frieda leaned back and groaned.

" This game is so weird," Frieda said. "And you and your friends played this game all the time?"

" Yeah! We always had so much fun!" Ymir then twiddled her hair awkwardly. "Mostly because Erika didn't win every single time."

Frieda then turned to face Annie as she stood by the tree. "Hey Annie, you wanna join us?"

Annie didn't respond.

" Frieda, I'm still not really sure if I'm comfortable with her-" "Oh hush you. I'm just trying to make her feel welcome," Frieda replied before turning back to Annie. "Hey! Annie! Did you hear me?"

Annie shuddered slightly, which made Frieda grow concerned. She stood up and walked over to her while Ymir began to shuffle the deck, which proved difficult given how thick each card was.

" Annie? Are you okay?"

Annie remained silent. Frieda then noticed that she was watching the memories of the Female titan. Frieda looked at them as well and saw that she was viewing a scene from her past, where she was speaking to her father one last time before she would have to leave for Paradis. The man was on his knees before her with his hands gripping her shoulders and tears in his eyes.

" Annie... I'm so sorry," he began, biting back his tears. "I don't expect you to forgive me, but... please... please, just stand your ground. Stand your ground, even if the whole world stands against you! They will despise you, they won't understand... but I do. Your dad always will..." Her father then brought her in for a hug as he began to sob. "Promise me you'll return... that's all I ask..."

Annie placed a hand on her father's back, and with tears in her eyes, replied with, "I pro-"

Annie slammed her fist through the screen and onto the tree, causing wood chips to shatter off of it, losing their glow in the process. However, the dent she made into the tree almost immediately was mended, as if nothing had even happened to it. Frieda was at a loss for words for a moment, but eventually, Frieda walked up to Annie and hugged her. Annie clutched the back of Frieda's gown as she began to sob over her shoulder. Ymir meanwhile simply looked away, then brought up Eren's memories

just to see what was going on with him. The first thing that caught Ymir's attention was that Eren was now a girl.

' Hugh, so that's what happens when a guy eats the female titan,' Ymir thought.

However, Ymir's eyes widened when she realized that in the distance, Bertholdt had reached his maximum height of 200 meters. This did not bode well for Eren, so Ymir called Frieda to show her what was happening. Annie followed Frieda after wiping the tears from her eyes, and the three of them witnessed the impercievably slow-moving image of Eren and his group attempting to evade attacks from the Armored and Colossal titan.

-E-

Gunther, Sasha, and Armin maneuvered through the street on foot with Eren in toe. Armin had to hold onto her hand so that she could keep pace with them, as Eren was still shaken over having killed Annie, in conjunction with being informed that Reiner and Bertholdt are the armored and colossal titans, and still trying to grasp the fact that she was now a woman. Armin looked back and saw that the Armored Titan was distracted by the other scouts, in particular Levi and Mikasa, who were able to cut his joints, but weren't able to get through the naip without shattering their blades. Despite this though, they did manage to temporarily down Reiner, allowing the four of them a chance to breathe. While they were resting, Armin placed a hand on Eren's shoulder and looked into her eyes.

"Are you gonna be okay?" He asked.

Eren looked down at her hands as she leaned against a wall. "I... I don't know..."

"Hey, don't think too much about what's happened right now," Gunther interjected. "The time for that can wait. Focus on what's happening: we need to get to your basement before the Colossal titan's temper tantrum makes it so there's no basement left to find."

As if on cue, the ground shook violently as Colossal titan screamed once more, decimating more of the city. Shingles fell off of the house they were next to and one landed on Sasha's head, causing her to wince in pain and cover a bruise on her head with her hands. Realizing the stakes of the situation, Eren tightened her fists and clenched her eyes shut.

'He's right,' She thought. 'This isn't boot camp anymore. This is real. I don't have time to wine and cry about who betrayed who, or if I happen to be a girl now. I have a job to do, and I need to do it.'

"I know where my house is!" She said, then beckoned everyone to follow her.

The group then hurried through the streets as the Armored titan was being restrained by the scouts, with several nets being thrown down onto him while Levi was sent to help deal with the Colossal Titan. The four of them ran down the street, passing by rubble from the original titan attack, and empty houses that used to hold entire families. They eventually reached what remained of Eren's childhood home, and found a latch door leading to the basement. There was a brief, awkward moment where Eren's key wouldn't fit into the lock, so they ended up ramming the old, delapidated door down and hurrying inside as another roar shook the city once again. However, upon entering, the rumbling of the Colossal Titan's roar caused rubble to pile up in front of their only exit.

Armin began hyperventilating, but Sasha quickly covered his mouth, warning him to save his breaths, while trying her best not to panic herself. All four of them became so mentally preoccupied with the fact that they were trapped in there, that they completely forgot to even look for what was hidden down there.

" *SHIT!*" Ymir shouted.

" *What are we going to do!?" Frieda asked frantically.*

" Why does it matter?" Annie asked. Frieda and Ymir looked back at her, surprised by her statement, as she continued. "If Eren dies in there, his- er... her power will be transferred to the next Eldian baby. With any luck, it's in Marley, but if it's not, Marley can always just come back and find them."

" Annie, do you not realize that this is our best chance at ending Battr's curse?" Ymir replied. "Without Eren, we're basically back to square one!"

" It doesn't matter. I've checked the Cuse's stipulations through the memories." She then pointed accusingly at Ymir. "You're the only one Battr will free from this damn place once the powers are united again, so what do I care if that moron dies or not?"

Ymir was left unsure of what to say at that moment, but then Frieda spoke up. "Well, what if the Scouts capture Reiner and Bertholdt before they capture Eren? Who will be around to capture the new Founding, Female, Attack titan shifter then?"

Annie glared at Ymir for a moment before looking away and crossing her arms. "Check my memories. They'll show the training I did for how to get out of situations like these."

Friesa gave a smug smile before switching to the Female titan memories and watching Annie train to use her power in small, enclosed spaces surrounded by allies, something which even Ymir herself didn't do, so she was quite impressed when Annie made it work. While Frieda was watching through these memories, Annie and Ymir looked back to the present.

The commotion from within Shingonshina could be heard for miles. And within this radius of earshot, it wound up waking up one of the two sleeping giants outside of the district. Isabella Tatopoulos slowly awoke from her slumber and rubbed her eyes. After fully awakening, she saw a titan four times the height of the wall rampaging

throughout the walled city. She stood up and scratched herself with her foot before knocking on Gigan's forehead.

[Hey, Gigan, something's up in the town.]

No response. Unfortunately, try as she might, she couldn't awaken Gigan from his shutdown. Sighing audibly, Isabella realized she would have to face something over twice her height alone.

As the Colossal Titan roared and rampaged, Isabella was quiet and careful with each movement. Her dorsal spines began to vibrate as she entered a camouflaged state that made her practically invisible and allowed her to move so carefully and delicately that she could stand right on top of people's houses without even the slightest bit of structural damage. As Isabella crept towards the Colossal Titan, she saw the Scouts on the ground around it, many of them injured or on the brink of death, either from the burning heat of the titan's body, or the roar rattling their organs and rupturing their eardrums.

As the scouts tried to regroup and come up with a new plan, Levi suddenly felt something on his head for a moment, before it was lifted up off of it. He looked around but saw nothing, completely unaware of what it could have been. As he wondered this however, he saw a sudden bolt of lightning nearby, which he sent Jean, Connie, and Marco to investigate.

The trio nodded and went to go find out what was going on. Connie, believing that it was Eren transforming again, landed at the spot and with a smile.

"Great timing, big guy!" He called. "We could use the back u-" However he paused when he saw the titan below him.

Jean and Marco soon arrived as well and looked down upon the titan below them. It was short, with a large head and sharp teeth, dark brown hair, brown skin, and long arms with comparatively short legs. The gremlin titan stood before a crushed and burning building, and in its hand was an unconscious and bloody Krista Lenz.

"W-who are you?" Jean asked.

Eventually, Isabella found herself in range of the Colossal titan as it continued to howl furiously. Perched up on the rooves of a neighborhood's houses, she waited for the perfect moment to strike, her grip on one of the houses tightening in anticipation. She waited...

and waited...

and...

Now!

Isabella suddenly released her chamo-mode and lunged from her vantage point, the force of the jump crushing the houses as she landed on the Colossal Titan's back and began slashing at its back with her claws. The Colossal Titan eventually grabbed her and threw her off as steam billowed from his back. She climbed back to her feet and gave a taunting grunt before entering a battle stance, her tail in the air and her hands on the ground, while the Colossal Titan raised his fists in defiance.

Having snapped out of his enraged stupor, Bertholdt began the battle by unleashing a roar right at Isabella. She clutched her ears and squinted, but it was no use, and they ended up exploding, causing blood to streak down her face. Bertholdt then closed the distance and rammed into her, smacking her into the wall and proceeding to pummel her. Isabella grunted in pain with each hit but managed to blast Bertholdt away with a blast of Atomic Breath.

The blast sent Bertholdt flying for miles, giving Isabella enough time to regenerate her eardrums. She then shook off some debris, then jumped out of the way when Bertholdt tried to roar at her again, retaliating with another blast of Atomic Breath which severed Bert's arm. Bertholdt attempted to scream at her once again, but this time, she burrowed underground, leaping up behind him and pinning him to the ground. She then took her time playing with her prey, gently gliding her claws against Bertholdt's naip, when Bertholdt used a last

ditch weapon in the form of a massive explosion of steam which launched Isabella into the air and out of the wall, allowing him to exit his titan before Levi can take advantage of his position and go save Reiner.

Isabella landed in a forest outside of the walls, crushing three titans on the way down. She groaned angrily and got back to her feet, then dug back underground to return to Shingonshina. She was digging so fast that she was practically swimming through the dirt and stone. However, while digging, she found herself in a Baragon nest, where a female and male Baragon were both guarding their pups. Isabella attempted to explain herself, but it was ultimately fruitless as the female blasted her with her Magma Heat Ray and then began to chase her through the ground.

-R-

Reiner struggled as the several weighted nets draped over him and the various harpoons launched into his un-armored spots held him firmly in place. He was trapped, and completely at the mercy of these devils. As his eyes darted around the area, he overheard Hange's gleeful squeals at having caught him, before she jumped down from a roof to get a better look at him.

"Now, darling, behave yourself," she cooed playfully, before placing a hand on his face. "We wouldn't want to have to do something painful to you this soon." She then held one of her blades up to his eye. "After all, it would be such a shame to find out whether or not you can feel pain in this form while I don't have my notebook handy. I tend to take the best notes in the moment, so having to jot it down after the fact would just not be as effective. Oh, but I'm rambling again, aren't I?"

Reiner squinted in response to her, silently making his opinion heard. This wordless statement was picked up immediately by Hange.

"Do your worst?" Hange began laughing maniacally before a psychotic, drooling grin stretched across her face. "It would be my

pleasure~"

However, she was suddenly distracted when she heard two of her comrades being cut down by Bertholdt, who proceeded to cut the harpoons in Reiner's arm, allowing him to break free from there. Hange jumped back and glided back to the rooftops as Reiner rose to his feet and began running down the street once more, crushing Scouts that didn't make it into the air in time. Bertholdt then landed on one of his shoulders and anchored himself to it. Mikasa proceeded to launch herself after Reiner, blades drawn as she tried to down him once again, only to be dodged masterfully as it continued to flee.

"Damnit!" Hange cursed under her breath. "How are we going to catch up with him now!?"

"NEED A HAND!?" Connie called. Hange looked behind her and up, and saw Jean, Marco, Connie, and an unconscious Krista riding towards them on top of a quadrupedal titan that was leaping from building to building before stopping in front of her.

Hange placed her hands on the sides of her head in shock and excitement as she saw them riding a titan, and only grew even more excited when Connie asked the titan to explain, and called it 'Ymir.'

"Y-you mean to tell me that-"

"Yeah, I'm Ymir," She said far more clearly than Eren was able to. "I already know you're gonna want answers, but right now, we don't have time. We need to stop Reiner." Ymir then plucked Krista off her back and handed her off to Hange. "Here. Take her to a medic, quickly."

With that, Ymir ran off, leaping from building to building once again in pursuit of the Armored Titan. As Mikasa soared through the air, she saw Ymir beside her, assisting her in her pursuit of the Armored titan. For the time being, Mikasa decided not to ask questions, simply appreciating that the new Titan Shifter in town was on her side at

least for now. As they kept chasing him however, they realized that Reiner was headed toward Eren's house. Upon realizing this, Mikasa tried to speed up as much as she could and go for Reiner's exposed shoulder, but Bertholdt parried her attack as Reiner grew closer and closer.

Ymir opened Reiner's memories and could see that he was even closer to Eren's house than before. She clenched her fists nervously, then looked back past Annie, who was watching Bertholdt's memories to get some idea of what he saw in her, and towards Frieda, who was still watching Annie's memories. "Frieda, whatever your plan is, we're running out of time!" She called. "Reiner's almost at Eren's house!"

"Don't worry, I'm just about done," she replied.

"With what?"

"I memorized the exact points Annie's training involving escaping these situations with her powers so that we can pass it on to Eren."

"Why didn't you just ask me to unlock Annie's memories?"

"We don't have time to make her question why she's remembering things about Annie's past, so I only memorized the point where Annie was actually training, with no dialogue referencing her," Frieda explained. "This way, it will be easier for Eren to figure out what she needs to do."

Ymir nodded. "Alright. You know what to do then."

Frieda took a deep breath, and began giving her order, "Ymir Fritz, I command you to grant Eren Jaeger only the memories of Annie Leonheart that I had been extensively studying, and give her the idea to use these memories to free herself and her allies."

Ymir's eyes began to glow light blue, as the sand around her began to twirl in a sudden swirling wind surrounding her.

" Your wish is my command..."

-R-

Suddenly, before Reiner could reach the house, a huge, skeletal hand suddenly burst out of what remained of the house. This surprise stalled Reiner long enough for Ymir to jump onto him and begin clawing at him, her powerful bite able to crack Reiner's armor and knock Bertholdt off. Mikasa meanwhile swung down to the hole that the hand had created and looked down to see Eren, Sasha, Gunther, and Armin. She was relieved that her friends were alive but was horrified to see the state Eren was in. Looking down into the surprisingly intact basement, she saw that Eren was pale and shivering, and her nose was bleeding heavily. Armin held her in his arms, as she was too weak to even stand upright.

"ARMIN!" Mikasa cried as she leaped down into the basement with them. "What happened to Eren?!"

"W-we got trapped down here," He explained. "S-so, she volunteered to use her power to help us escape and..." He brushed his thumb beneath her nose, wiping away some of the blood, only for more to take its place. "It looks like it wiped her out..."

"Eren..." Tears welled up in Mikasa's eyes as she held her hand gently. However, they were distracted when they heard Ymir screaming as she was flung overhead and into a nearby building. Reiner then peered into the basement and attempted to reach down and grab them. Mikasa and Gunther managed to cut through his fingers, then fled the basement as Reiner began chasing after them, Mikasa carrying Eren on her back.

However, before Reiner could catch up with them, Jean and Marco suddenly swooped in and slashed at him, shattering their own blades in the process, but distracting him long enough for Ymir to rush in

once again with a slash of her claws. She skidded in front of him, and he attempted to kick her in the jaw, only for her to dodge roll out of the way, and unhinge her jaws to bite down on the front of his neck.

Reiner managed to pry her off, but her attack left his head dangling lazily with most of the muscles and tendons ripped out and his back partially exposed. Jean immediately tried to take advantage of this vulnerable state. He zipped around Reiner, making his way up to the neck, prompting Reiner to cover his neck with his hand when suddenly, he howled in pain as he felt someone slash into the other side of it. Jean and Reiner both saw that it was Connie, who cheered as he swung past before Marco tackled him out of the way as Reiner swiped for him.

Ymir then leaped up and sank her teeth into that arm, grinding her teeth on his armor before properly sinking them into his flesh. Reiner stumbled forwards as Ymir tugged hard, about to tear it off, when Bertholdt suddenly flew in, about to slash her naip, but his attack was suddenly blocked by Jean, who proceeded to kick Bert down to Reiner's shoulder, then tumbling to the ground, where he managed to climb back to his feet just as Jean landed in front of him with a fiery look in his eye. Bertholdt responded to Jean's gaze by cracking his neck and spitting in Jean's direction before the two's blades clashed with eachother.

The two were constantly switching between ground combat and aerial combat, their steel blades clanging together as they slashed at eachother. Jean's superior speed allowed him to get a few more cuts in than Bertholdt could, but neither man was able to get a good hit on the other, not helped by Ymir and Reiner's continued brawl now more akin to a continued chase.

Eventually, Jean managed to break Bertholdt's blades while the two were in the air. Realizing the bad situation he was in, Bertholdt used his ODM gear to swing through the air, latching onto a nearby roof and slamming Jean through it, resulting in both of them landing hard into the one-floor house. Jean tumbled and coughed up blood as he

crashed into a dining room table, scaring away a family of rats. He then looked up and saw Bertholdt also beaten up by his landing, but able to get up quicker thanks to his heightened regeneration. He reached to unsheathe another set of blades when suddenly, both of his arms were severed from behind.

Bertholdt wailed in agony as Jean widened his eyes, seeing Levi standing behind Bertholdt with a pair of bloody blades. Both of his legs were then sliced off, leaving Bertholdt to writhe on the floor as blood gushed out of his shoulders and hips.

"You're lucky Erwin wants you alive," Levi snarled, before turning to face Jean. "Can you stand?"

Jean grunted as he supported himself on a couch arm. "Y-yes sir!" He grunted, clutching his pelvis.

"Good. Let's get you out of here," Levi replied. As Jean passed him towards the door, Levi gave him a gentle pat on the shoulder. "You did well, soldier."

Jean sighed softly. "Thank you, sir." With that, he limped onwards, eventually being picked up by Marco and Connie while Levi strapped the limbless Bertholdt to his back and carried him away.

Meanwhile, Isabella rose from beneath the ground covered in soot and scorches. She kicked Baragon in the face, forcing him back underground, before kicking dirt over the burrow. Having made the executive decision to not try going underground after her fifth Baragon nest encounter, she decided to simply jump the wall. She stepped back a few hundred meters, sprinted at incredible speeds, and then hopped right over the wall, landing right in Shingonshina. She announced her presence with a mighty war cry while baring her teeth and claws... and received no response.

She awkwardly looked around and scratched her head, thinking maybe it was hiding or something, but no. It seemed that the

Colossal Titan was gone. Shame. Isabella would have liked to settle the score. However, seeing the Armored titan chasing after several of the Scouts, she figured she could take out some of her frustrations picking on it for a bit. So she zipped over to it and snatched it off the ground, the little human riding on it falling off as soon as she grabbed it. It wriggled and writhed fearfully in her hand as she playfully flicked it on the head, and put the top half of it in her mouth a few times just to scare it.

She giggled as she watched it freak out, before looking down and noticing that the Scouts were apprehending that one human that was riding on the Armored Titan. Isabella shrugged and then continued to play with the Armored titan, before handing it to the humans after hearing one that called herself "Hange" ask for it quite politely once you get past the shouting.

With her job now done, Isabella curled up and went back to sleep. Or at least she tried to but she was kept awake by Hange screaming with excitement begging Moblit to get her notepad.

-G-

Several hours later...

The red lights on Gigans body turned back on as Gigan reactivated. He yawned and stretched his arms before standing back up, feeling quite refreshed after a long night of slumber. He then unfolded his metallic wings and took to the skies, first and foremost going to Shingonshina to check on the Scouts.

Upon arriving, however, he found that the city was in even greater ruins than before, with most of it completely decimated. He then noticed Isabella standing guard over two cages which, upon scanning them, he found contained Reiner and Bertholdt. He then overheard Commander Erwin and the other higher-ups of the Scouts debating what should be done with the girl known as Ymir. He was confused by all of this, so he tried calling out to Eren, hoping to find out what was going on, but received a response from Isabella.

[She can't talk right now,] she said. [She's in a coma.]

{She who?} Gigan asked.

Isabella raised an eyebrow in response. **[Um... Eren? The girl you were trying to call?]**

{I think you're thinking of the wrong person, because as far as I know, Eren's a guy.}

[Not from what I heard.]

Now even more confused, Gigan had Pelops do a scan of the city to find Eren. Pelops' scans turned up negative initially until he picked up on a girl the exact same age as Eren, and with strikingly similar physical traits, in a coma in a nearby safe house. After discovering this, Gigan then slowly looked back down at Isabella with only one question on his mind.

{What the hell happened last night?}

[A lot.]

Battle in Stohess

-E-

Eren gasped as she awoke with a jolt. She placed a hand on her chest and felt her heart pounding rapidly, then yelped and moved it up to her forehead and fell back over as the feeling of a splitting migraine suddenly came over her. As she squeezed her forehead with both hands, she suddenly felt a comforting hand placed on her shoulder. It was Mikasa, who was sitting by her side.

"Eren, what's wrong?!" She asked with a worried inflection.

Eren panted softly as she slowly lifted herself back into a sitting position, before looking around, realizing that she was sitting in a wagon with Mikasa and Armin by her side, both of them worried for her. Looking around, she saw the rest of the scouts on horseback, a few of them sitting in cots, watching over the dead or injured. She also noticed two particularly interesting caravans. One was a wagon that held everything they were able to loot from the basement, primarily books, and chemicals, but they were also able to fit Geisha's entire desk. This comforted the titan shifter, as it proved to her that despite their losses, the mission was successful. The other caravan was carrying a cage that seemed to be made of the same Nano-Metal that Gigan used to rebuild the gates, and within the cage were Reiner and Bertholdt. This confused Eren, and she decided to ask Armin and Mikasa about it. Mikasa was taken aback by her question when Armin reminded her that no one had told Eren about them yet.

"Tell me about what?" Eren asked.

"Eren, please don't freak out," Armin pleaded, before taking a deep breath and admitting it to him. "Bertholdt is the Colossal Titan, and Reiner is the Armored Titan."

Eren's eyes nearly bulged out of her head upon hearing this, and she found herself clenching her fists so hard that she almost drew blood from her palms. However, before she could break the skin, she heard Petra maneuver her horse closer to the cart.

"Eren, just calm down," she said. "We already have them locked up. Don't do anything rash."

Eren growled and turned her ire toward the men in the cage. She dragged herself to her feet and slammed her hands onto the rim of her cart before screaming at them.

"YOU BACKSTABBING BASTARDS!" She screamed.

"E-Eren, stop it," Armin pleaded.

Eren continued. "WHAT THE HELL WAS GOING THROUGH YOUR HEADS WHEN WE TRAINED TOGETHER?! REINER, ALL YOUR TALK OF GOING TO THE HOME YOU LOST, WAS THAT JUST A FUCKING ACT?! WHAT ABOUT ALL THE TIMES YOU SUPPORTED US?! ALL THE TIMES YOU SUPPORTED ME?!" Mikasa and Armin both noticed tears well up in Eren's eyes. "You were my hero! You were everything I wished I could be... why...?"

Reiner said nothing in response. In his mind, he deserved what she was saying to him.

Eren then wiped away her tears as her rage surged once more. "And **you!** " She pointed at Bertholdt. "Did you enjoy your visit to Shingonshina? All that destruction, all those ruins, all those **corpses**, were all because of you!" She leaned forwards only for Mikasa to hold her back. "YOU SHOULD BE ERASED! YOU DON'T DESERVE TO EXIST, YOU ABOMINA-"

" **SHUT THE FUCK UP, YOU DEVIL!** " Bertholdt screamed. Everyone paused and looked to Bertholdt, confused. That phrase, "devil" was such an oddly specific term, yet one that Eren found oddly familiar.

"All of you, you're all devils. I see that now," Bertholdt hissed, before backtracking. "No... deep down, I always knew you all were devils. I just didn't accept it. You all acted so human, so relatable, so... so much like me. It almost made me regret kicking the walls down. Reiner practically had to twist my arm to get me to do it again. But now..." Bertholdt let out a slightly manic giggle. "Now I see the truth. **You're** the abomination who deserves to be erased, Eren Jaeger! And I swear to you, I will kill you as slowly and painfully as possible."

"What a coincidence," Eren spat back. "I was about to say the same to you."

"Eren, please! Don't provoke them," Armin said. "They might still be able to escape, just like you did from the basement."

"No, they can't," Ymir suddenly said. The trio turned and saw Ymir in a cart nearby looking over an unconscious Krista. "If they were able to, they would have done it by now. Reiner had more than enough time to regain his energy by now."

"How do you know that?" Eren asked.

"She's a titan shifter too," Petra answered.

Eren's eye twitched before she threw up her hands in frustration. "OH, GREAT! SO LET ME GUESS, SHE'S WORKING WITH THEM!?"

"Eren, Ymir helped us capture Reiner and Bertholdt," Mikasa said.

"O-oh..." Eren then turned to Ymir. "Um... thank you."

"Don't mention it," she said with a distant tone in her voice.

Ymir could honestly care less about the Scouts. However, she figures that helping the guys who have the Black Angel and the Founding Titan on their side would probably provide her and Krista with more safety than giving herself and Krista up to the guys who

will probably take her back to Marley, where she'll be eaten by whoever is scheduled to have the Jaw titan next. When she weighed up her options, even if they put her on trial like they did with Eren, it'd probably be better for her in the long run than the other option.

"Still though, quit poking the bears, Eren," Petra said before joining back with her group up ahead.

Eren took a seat and rested her head in her arms as she contemplated the whole situation, finally having a moment to breathe and think about what had happened. After contemplating the numerous ways she wanted to tear Bertholdt and Reiner to pieces, the thing that was most prominent in her mind was the question of how her mother would react to what has happened to her. The idea that her son left the walls one day and came back as her daughter was one she may not be able to understand. What really terrified her though was the thought that she'd approach her mother, and the first thing she'd say to her was "I'm sorry, have we met?" As she contemplated this, she felt the cart suddenly come to a stop.

She picked her head up and looked around, noticing a bunch of abandoned houses surrounding her. She quickly realized that they were already at the gate, where Erwin set off a smoke signal to signify their arrival. While waiting, the mood was tense. The wait for the gate to open was ironically one of the more dangerous parts of any expedition, as titans could start approaching them while at their most vulnerable, and most depleted. More than a few soldiers were lost in the past just from the wait to get back inside. However, on this day, their fear was unnecessary, as Gigan and Isabella had already done a spectacular job at making this section of Wall Maria completely safe for them to travel through.

Soon enough, the gates rose with a pneumatic hiss, and the scouts began funneling in, crowds of people watching them ride by, many whispering amongst each other, but few actually heckling them, as they clearly brought back something useful, judging by the cart of stuff from the basement. The crowd did however have quite the riot

heckling and mocking Reiner and Bertholdt as they were paraded around the city like zoo animals. That brought a smile to Eren's face.

Mikasa looked out into the crowd and saw the little girl from before climbing up onto a box, then waving at her and giving her a salute, which Mikasa returned. She then blushed bright crimson when she saw her holding up a drawing she made of her fireman carrying Sasha with the shape of a heart encircling them in red crayon. A few other scouts noticed this drawing, including Sasha, who giggled at the thought, her cheeks also slightly reddened.

Ymir continued to watch over Krista, brushing a bit of hair out of her face. She parted the hair on her forehead, then slowly leaned in... before pulling away and sighing as she placed her hands on her knees.

'Not yet,' she thought.

"Excuse me, captain Levi?"

Ymir looked up towards the front, seeing a man running up to Levi with a letter in his hand.

"I'm Petra's father," he said. "Might I lend your ear for a moment, before she sees us?"

Levi shrugged. "What do you want?"

"Well, apparently, you hand-picked her yourself?"

"That's correct."

"Well, she's very excited to be working alongside you, sir. She seems very devoted to you. So devoted that to be honest, her mother and I are getting a bit concerned," Petra's father laughed awkwardly.

"Get to the point already."

He cleared his throat and tugged on his collar. "W-well, you see, as her father, it might be hard to let go of my little girl, but still, it seems far too early for her to be thinking about marriage."

Levi raised an eyebrow. As her father continued to explain, he looked back and saw Petra looking around at the crowd. She eventually looked back at him and gave him a bright smile and a wave. Levi looked away and off into space as he thought back to all his interactions with her, wondering whether or not she ever showed any signs of affection towards him, made all the more difficult due to his bad people skills. He ultimately shook it off and interrupted Petra's father mid-sentence.

"Look, if you wanna talk about this with someone, go talk to your daughter back there," he pointed at Petra with his thumb.

"R-right, thank you, captain," and with that, the father went to go confront his daughter.

"So, when's the wedding happening?" Hange asked, leaning down from her horse.

"It's not," Levi bluntly stated. "Besides, even if it was, like hell would I tell you. You'd probably bring your pet titan to be the priest."

"I would not!" Hange said in an exaggerated offended tone, before switching to a more jovial tone when adding, "Gigan Jr. would be one of the bride's maids."

Despite the high casualty count, the Scouts' latest excursion beyond the walls was a profound success. Not only did they retrieve the secrets from the cellar, but they managed to capture not one, not two, but three new titan shifters, gain a greater understanding of Eren's true potential **and** ensure that Shingonshina would be a safe place for mankind to repopulate in the future.

Within hours of the Scouts' return, they were called back to the capital to discuss Eren's now permanent custody under the scout

regiment, and the re-location of Carla Jaeger and Daisuke Serizawa back to the Trost district.

Serizawa stood by Carla's side as she leaned against a stone railing for support. After weeks of testing prosthetics and obtaining all the materials needed to construct them, Serizawa finally made a pair of working prosthetic legs for Carla, and they had finally entered the phase where she could start adjusting to them.

"Just one step at a time," he said. "Take your time. You're doing well."

Carla smiled gratefully at Serizawa as she leaned against the stone rail after almost tripping. She slowly took one step forwards after another, always moving forwards bit by bit. Slowly, she grew accustomed to it, and before long, she managed to reach the end of the railing.

Several MP officers and recruits watched the scene in front of them while they were taking one of their many breaks, and were quite impressed by the working fake limbs that Serizawa had created. Even commander Nile Dock stopped by to marvel at this technological marvel and wondered how it could be used to help his own soldiers. As she made her last step towards the finish line, the crowd clapped for her as Serizawa supported her and guided her back to her wheelchair.

"I never would have imagined that I would be able to walk again," Carla remarked, sniffing softly. "Thank you, Daisuke."

"I'm impressed at how well you were able to wear the prosthetics. I expected them to cause some sort of discomfort, but you seem perfectly fine."

In truth, Carla's body ached quite a bit, but she decided not to admit this at the moment, as the high of being able to walk again was still

on her mind. Still, she did appreciate being able to sit down in her chair again.

"Will I need to wear them all the time? Do I have to do anything specific to maintain them?"

"There's a lot more I have to record during your progress to determine certain things, but no, you won't be wearing them **all** the time. You can take them off when you're sleeping or bathing, and you should let me know if they start to feel uncomfortable. As for maintenance, I'll handle that. Now, let's get you back to your room."

Serizawa got behind Carla and began to wheel her back to her room, but before they left, Nile approached Serizawa. "Doctor? May I speak with you for a moment? Alone?"

"Hm? Um... sure," He replied before turning to Carla. "I'll be with you in the room later. Someone else will take you back."

Carla nodded as one of the MP recruits helped her back to her room while Serizawa followed Nile out of the courtyard.

", ever since we've taken you two in, I was unsure of what to think of you two," he began.

"Well, what about now?" Serizawa asked. "It seems as though you've warmed up to us."

"Don't mistake tolerance for friendliness, sir. I still have my suspicions regarding her knowledge of her husband and the origins of her son's powers."

"I'd tell you she and her son are just victims of circumstances, but I'm sure you've heard that before.."

Nile sighed and placed his hand on his forehead. "I'd like to believe that, but there's no good evidence in support of it. In all honesty, though, I hope the Survey Corps pulls off their expedition."

Serizawa raised an eyebrow. "Weren't you and your regiment the ones trying to get your hands on Eren during the trial? Why change your mind?"

"I never wanted him in the walls!" Nile argued, "None of us want something as dangerous as him in the interior! I'd much prefer that he stay with the people who know what they're doing."

"Then why go through all that effort to try and get custody over him?"

"King's orders. Apparently, he really wants to get his hands on Eren for personal reasons. Classified reasons of course..."

Serizawa nodded, then began considering the implications of this. He would have to make sure to let Xiang know to investigate the King in the future.

"But anyway, I didn't just come to tell you that," Nile continued. "I'd like to know your plans for the future. Do you plan on caring for for a long time?"

Serizawa didn't hesitate to answer. "Yes. I hope to care for her for as long as I can."

Nile nodded in understanding. "Well, that's a shame, be cause I was hoping you would consider working at one of the hospitals nearby. After seeing you make an artificial limb for her, I was hoping you could do the same for soldiers who also lost their own."

"While I appreciate the offer, Commander, I'll have to politely decline. Carla still requires my full attention for the time being."

Serizawa chose not to give his full reasoning, which was that he didn't want to support any military ever again. After concluding his conversation with Nile, he turned to head back to Carla. However, Serizawa stopped when he sound of a croaking noise nearby.

"Did you hear that?" Nile asked.

Serizawa nodded as the two heard it again, this time followed by a hissing screech, sounding closer than before. The two pressed their backs against each other as Nile pulled his rifle out from off of his back. Eventually, the two heard rattling in the rafters above them. Something was crawling above them. Something too big to be a rodent or cat. Eventually, Serizawa caught a glimpse of a clawed, reptilian hand reaching down for Nile and tackled him to the ground as it swiped at him. The two men then turned around and saw a bipedal reptile jump down in front of them and roar, unveiling a maw of sharp teeth.

Serizawa pulled Nile to his feet as they began running, the Baby Zilla giving them a head start before pouncing towards them at alarming speeds. Nile was able to get a shot in, which left a bleeding hole in the side of its head and sent it tumbling to the ground. Nile nudged it with his foot, and it didn't move. He shook his foot, getting some of the blood off of his shoe.

"Okay, I think we're safe," Nile said.

"No we're not," Serizawa said with a horrified expression. "I know these creatures, and they never hunt alone. Which means-"

Suddenly, Serizawa and Nile heard screams coming from the other side of the structure.

"CARLA!" Serizawa cried before he ran to the source of the scream, with Nile close behind him.

The two arrived to find Marlo Freudenberg and Hitch Dreyse standing guard around Carla, attempting to fend off five Baby Zillas at once. Or rather, Marlo was trying to fend them off, while Hitch was too terrified to even move an inch. The two Baby Zillas in front of her lapped up every ounce of fear she showed them as they crept closer and closer.

"B-BACK OFF, YOU MONSTERS!" Marlo shouted while aiming a rifle at three of them, his voice trembling and knees quivering slightly.

"I-I'M WARNING Y-"

One of the Baby Zillas cut him off by grabbing the barrel of the gun in her claw and pressing her head against it, blood dripping from her maw as a smug grin stretched across her face. Between her jagged teeth, Marlo could see what remained of her last meal. The small shards of fabric between her teeth clued him in that the unfortunate soul that found their way into the jaws of death was a human. Marlo clenched his eyes shut and pulled the trigger on his rifle. The shot left a bleeding wound on her forehead, but to his horror, she wasn't dead.

One of the other Baby Zillas proceeded to bite the rifle, snapping it in two, but just before another could lunge, she was suddenly shot in the soft underbelly, leaving a mortal wound. Marlo looked to his savior and saw Nile holding a smoking rifle.

"You two! Help Serizawa get Carla to safety! That's an order!" Nile then got between them and the Baby Zillas as Marlo and Hitch saluted him before they and Serizawa wheeled Carla out of there.

Nile loaded another shot, but before he could, a tail wrapped around his neck and dragged him to the ground. He looked up and, to his horror, saw the face of the Baby Zilla from earlier looking down at him. The other four soon joined their sister, opening their jaws wide as they began to eat the man alive. Nile screamed in utter agony as the reptiles tore into his flesh, gobbling up all they could get their teeth on while saving anything vital for last. The sadistic creatures took a sick pleasure in making the man suffer a slow, agonizing death in their jaws.

[Now now, little sisters, don't eat too much.]

The five looked up, then ran outside, leaving Nile hanging on by a thread. The little lizards looked up and saw a fully grown Zilla looming over the building and looking down on them.

[You don't want to spoil your appetites before supper.] She said.

[Okay, big sister,] they said in unison.

The larger Zilla chuckled, then left the little ones to their own devices, while she returned to trampling the city of Stohess, alongside the other big sisters. And as Serizawa and the others made it out of the building and saw a Zilla's massive foot slam down in front of them, the true hopelessness of the situation finally dawned upon them. They then turned around and saw the five baby Zillas running towards them, one of them crushing Nile's severed head in her mouth and gulping it down as she approached.

Suddenly, just as the Baby Zillas were about to reach them, a cloud of mist rushed by the group and forced the lizards backward. The mist formed into a young Asian man who guarded the group with his life. When the Baby Zillas tried to approach again, he held out his hand, and it exploded into a cloud of mist with such violent force that it ripped the wooden boards out of the walls, floor, and ceiling, leaving them as blank foundations. The force snapped the necks of two of the lizards and crippled the other three, allowing him to use his mist to suffocate them with brutal efficiency.

Marlo, Hitch, and Carla were absolutely astonished, while Serizawa breathed a sigh of relief. Huang turned around as Marlo ran up to him.

"E-excuse me, sir," Marlo said. "First of all, thank you so much. I don't know what we would have done if you hadn't arrived."

"Probably died," Huang said. "That's my guess."

"B-but, ahem, second of all... who are you?"

Huang looked down for a moment, deciding whether or not to give him his name, before making a decision.

"I'm the Human Vapor."

Serizawa's eyes widened with surprise before Huang turned back to a mist form and disappeared. Marlo and Hitch were at a loss for words after what they just experienced, but luckily for them, Serizawa was there to pick up the slack. He began wheeling Carla way and called for them to join him, snapping them out of their shocked stupor as they began following him.

-E-

While riding through Sina towards Stohess, the Scouts immediately noticed something was very wrong when they saw smoke billowing out of the top of the wall. It wasn't Titan steam, no no. The smoke was black, signifying that there was a massive fire. Eren immediately became worried upon seeing it. No matter how she sliced it, this could not mean good news for her mom, or for Serizawa.

"What do you think's going on up there?" Mike asked Erwin.

Erwin remained silent for the time being but did fire off a flair once they were in range to signal that they were approaching. As the Scouts grew closer, however, it became clear that whatever was happening was something serious, so Erwin looked back to Levi.

"Levi, give the signal," he said.

Levi nodded, and then pulled a flair gun out of his bag. "Everyone, cover your ears!" He called, and they did as they were told before he fired off an acoustic round.

The purpose of this was to summon Gigan to their location, however, after waiting for a moment, he never came. This was concerning to the scouts, as this meant they may need to rely on Eren for this mission, and if it's against one of the stronger kaiju that Gigan warned them about, they may be doomed. This is something that Armin was thinking about as they drew closer to the city, eventually making it to the gates, which were still down.

Ness climbed off his horse and scaled the wall to see what was going on up there. As he climbed, however, he noticed something looking down at him. And as he climbed higher and higher, more and more of those figures looked down upon him, until eventually, he was able to see what they were: a pack of twelve Baby Zillas looking down upon him with greedy looks in their eyes.

Ness gasped and pulled back, but one of them grabbed him by the cables of his ODM gear, leaving him dangling in mid-air as the other Baby Zillas laughed at him. That was, until Ness reeled his anchors in, causing the Baby Zilla to fall off of the wall, screaming as Ness reeled her in and impaled her with both his blades, before kicking her off. He then swung back down to the ground to warn the others, however before he could reach them, he felt another one land on his back and sink her claws into him.

Eren watched, horrified as Ness coughed up blood, the Baby Zilla's claws piercing through him. He landed on the ground just as the Baby Zilla ripped his head off with her teeth, then consumed it. She then growled at the scouts, getting into position to attack, as everyone got ready to fight. Eren almost turned into a titan but restrained herself when she noticed the look Levi was giving her.

The lizard roared and lunged at them, but was quickly dispatched by Mikasa and Levi. They, Eren, Erwin, Mike, Jean, and Armin proceeded to scale the wall, now ready for a battle. The Baby Zillas tried to fight back, but were swiftly dispatched. All except one, which Eren took her time dismembering before kicking off of the wall, then huffing furiously. The group then looked down onto the city, finding it to be an absolute war zone, with nine adult Zillas causing rampant destruction, and countless Baby Zillas scurrying around the city.

However, within the city, the group saw something strange. They saw what appeared to be a cloud fighting against one of the adult Zillas. However, upon looking closer, they realized that the cloud would occasionally form into... a human?

Huang maneuvered back and forth, even turning his entire body into a cloud at times, avoiding the attacks of Zilla, while getting in as much damage as he can. Unfortunately for him, his impacts, while powerful against the smaller Zillas, were substantially less effective against the big ones, like this one. Eventually getting fed up with the constant back and forth, Huang tried to suffocate the Zilla, only for her to puff him out just as fast as he got into her nasal canals.

Huang tried to go back in, but the Zilla scooped a burning house into her maw and then turned towards him while he was in a cloud state. She then unleashed a blast of napalm ignited by the fire in her mouth, turning into a power breath beam that caused Huang to howl in agony as he was slowly forced back to his human form. The Zilla prepared to unleash another blast of her Power Breath, when she was suddenly interrupted by a bolt of lightning striking her back, stunning her, before she wailed in pain as she felt something punch one of her dorsal spines, cracking it.

She shook the creature off, then looked down, finding it to be a 15-meter-tall human woman with shoulder-length black hair, no genitalia to speak of, teeth exposed on her cheeks, and a firey look in her emerald eyes. The Zilla growled and charged at the human woman, prompting her to flee in the opposite direction. As the titan fled with the Zilla in toe, Huang saw the Scouts swoop down, coming to his aid.

"Are you alright?" Armin asked.

"I'm fine," Huang replied. He then looked up to see Erwin approaching him.

"Sir, do you know of any way we can defeat those creatures?" Erwin asked.

"Not with those swords of yours," he said. "The adult Zillas are way too tough for that. Even going all out, I could do little more than scratch it, and I doubt your friend over there could do any better."

The group then watched as Eren was suddenly launched across the city by the Zilla.

"Case in point," he sighed. "The Zillas are smart, sadistic, and strong in numbers. If you want to take them out, you'll need some bigger guns than that."

"What about the little ones?" Armin asked. "Surely we can take them all out with our blades."

"You could... if it weren't for the fact that the big ones reproduce asexually," Huang replied. "It doesn't matter how many you kill. The big ones will always be able to make more."

"How many more?" Erwin asked.

"They can produce as many as 1,000 eggs per litter."

This prospect made the scouts rather nervous. All except Erwin and Levi, who, even in the face of these bleak odds, remained stoic and fearless. Erwin turned to the troops and ordered them to find any survivors and lead them to safety, making sure that they stay in a group so they don't get picked off too quickly. The scouts nodded and took off while Erwin took a seat next to Huang and began formulating a plan with him.

Serizawa, Carla, Hitch, and Marlo hid in an alleyway as the city was smashed and crushed. Cannons could be heard firing at the monsters in the distance, followed by screams and explosions as the artillery crew was destroyed. Marlo carefully leaned out to check and see if the coast was clear, but Hitch quickly pulled him back as a pack of Baby Zillas patrolled through the street. Carla gripped Serizawa's hand tightly as tears of terror welled up in her eyes.

Serizawa remained silent, his eye closed in quiet contemplation. He thought back to all the events in his life leading up to this one. He wonders if maybe if he had taken the offer to leave Carla on her

own, he wouldn't be in this horrible situation, but he knew deep down that he could never do that to her, knowing it would just have led to her death at the hands of the Zillas. But is this any better? All his presence here has done is prolong the inevitable, except now, soon, he would die too. However, when he looked down at Carla, and felt the case on his back containing her prosthetics, he felt an oddly comforting sensation. That he could die peacefully knowing that caring for Carla was going to be his final act, at least it was a kind one.

And as the pack noticed them, it seemed as though his end would come soon. So, he wrapped his arms around her as she clutched his sleeves tightly and began to weep, thoughts rushing through her head about how she would never see her children achieve their dreams, never find out what happened to her husband, and never be able to hold her son again. As she closed her eyes, tears rolled down her cheeks as she made sure that her final thoughts would be those of the ones she loved most in this world.

However, as Hitch and Marlo were about to fire upon the Baby Zillas out of desperation, they were each suddenly cut down by a flurry of sword slashes. Heads rolled and blood splattered as the Baby Zillas were helpless against the sudden attack. The attackers soon landed, revealing themselves to be the scouts. Mikasa quickly noticed Carla within the group and ran towards her.

"MOM!" Mikasa shouted as she ran towards her.

"MIKASA!" Carla replied, nearly jumping out of her seat as the two tearfully embraced each other.

"!" Armin exclaimed as he joined the three, all of them embracing each other. After the three of them spent a moment in each other's embrace, Carla looked around at the other Scouts.

"Where's Eren?" She asked.

Mikasa and Armin looked at each other wide-eyed as the realization dawned on them. After Eren was thrown across the city, they couldn't find her anywhere.

"Mikasa, Armin, where is Eren?" Carla asked again, now sounding more concerned than before.

"... We don't know." Armin said.

Carla nearly had a heart attack upon hearing that. She placed a hand on her forehead as Mikasa held her hand to comfort her. However, before they could try to say anything to comfort her, they all heard a low rumble as a shadow slowly formed over them.

They all looked up and saw one of the adult Zillas looming over them, and she was quite unhappy with the slaughter of her little sisters. Hitch and Marlo tried to shoot it, but the bullets bounced right off of her snout, and only served to enrage her further. Everyone prepared for an attack as she raised her claw to swipe at them. Her claw came down to crush them all, and while most of them were able to escape with their ODM gear, they realized far too late that Carla and Serizawa were stuck on the ground.

They managed to avoid being crushed by escaping the alleyway, but the shockwave knocked them to the ground and knocked Carla out of her wheelchair. She then looked up weakly as Zilla raised her foot to crush her. However, as she was about to crush them, a loud rumbling noise could be heard, as something sped past the Scouts, leaving a trail of steam behind her. Carla and Serizawa flinched as the foot came down, but before it could reach them, something got between them and it.

Carla opened her eyes first and gasped as she saw a familiar-looking titan holding up the foot, her eyes blanked out and glowing blue, and her skin was covered in glowing, molten cracks as steam billowed off of her.

It was Eren, Carla knew this much. But the rage-filled look on her child's terrified her.

The titan unleashed a scream of abject rage as she threw the massive foot off of her, making Zilla stumble, before leaning down to swipe at the titan. Eren growled as she caught the swipe in her arms, before roaring with all her might and swinging Zilla around while spinning on her heels, before throwing her down the road. Zilla was so stunned by this, that she failed to notice Eren running at her with hardened fists before leaping up and punching her with enough force to cause her to recoil as blood squirted out of the wound.

Eren leaped up to attack once again but was knocked away by a tail smack which launched her into a building that collapsed on top of her. The Zilla then watched as she rose from the rubble and began charging down the burning street on all fours, then used her power breath, which was ignited by the fires surrounding her, to blast her backward.

"Oh no..." Mikasa said as she watched the battle with Armin. "She's in that berserk state again."

"Berserk state?" Armin asked.

"After Annie swallowed you and killed Mina and Mylius, she entered this enraged state and tore her apart. And now, she's doing it again, but she seems to be using Annie's powers in conjunction with this form."

Armin looked back at the battle, noticing that Eren trying to push forwards through it while roaring and screaming.

"She's not doing so strategically though," Armin said. "She's just pushing forwards mindlessly. Like she's completely lost herself to her rage."

The two then looked back and saw Serizawa helping Carla into her wheelchair. Armin went down to check and make sure they were

okay, while Mikasa broke off from the group to help Eren. Levi immediately noticed this and chased after her, the rest of the scouts soon following suit. However, by the time they reached her, it was already too late for her.

-E-

Eren screeched furiously as the Zilla continued her assault. She could feel her skin singe and burn away, as the force of the blast outmatched her ability to push forwards. However, the onslaught soon ended when the Zilla ran out of fluid to keep the power breath up, allowing Eren to quickly close the distance. However, instead of clashing with the Zilla, she burrowed underground, as a group of Baby Zillas jumped on her from all angles, all of them ripping into her flesh with their teeth and claws.

Eren slammed her body against buildings in an attempt to get them off, when Zilla rose from the ground, destabilizing the ground Eren stood on and causing her to fall into a sinkhole. Eren groaned and grunted as the Baby Zillas tapered off of her, and three more adult Zillas surrounded the pit. The Zillas then proceeded to stomp on her, slam their tails down on top of her, punch her, and blast her with power breath. Slowly, the molten cracks on Eren's body faded, and her eyes returned to normal, before shutting as she collapsed in the ditch.

The scouts arrived on the scene just as Eren was defeated. Mikasa screamed upon seeing the state Eren was in, and this scream drew the attention of the Zillas. Thankfully for them, Huang had arrived and drew their attention away from the Scouts by attacking them and getting them to chase him. Erwin and Armin soon landed with the Scouts, both parties completed what they set out to do. The two both looked down and saw Eren lying on the dirt, her body battered and broken, steam billowing off of it. However, despite that, her wounds didn't seem to be healing, nor was she ejecting from the Titan body.

"M-Mikasa, what happened?!" Armin asked.

"Th-the monsters..." she uttered. "She tried to fight them, but they... there were so many. She never stood a chance."

Levi stepped forwards and drew his blades.

"Alright, I'm getting the kid out of there," he said.

"W-WAIT! NOT YET!" Armin held Levi back. "The last time this happened, transforming a second time knocked her out! We need her in her titan form as long as possible!"

"Well, that titan form of hers isn't worth much when it's as unconscious as she was."

Armin looked down at Eren once again and thought about how Eren emerged from the naip every time. Then, he had an idea.

"Captain, let me do it then."

Levi raised an eyebrow. "What are you playing at?"

"I have an idea of how we can get her back." Armin walked towards the edge of the roof. "But I need to be the one to do it. You guys focus on helping the mist man." Everyone took off, however Erwin decided to stay behind, which Armin noticed.

"C-commander?"

"I'm interested to see what your plan is," He said. "If it works, it would be invaluable for future operations in case something like this were to happen again at a crucial moment."

Armin nodded before the two men rocketed down to Eren. Once there, Armin stood at the naip, and advised Erwin to anchor himself in place, before raising one of his blades.

"I'm sorry, Eren..." Armin said. "BUT WE NEED YOU!"

He clenched his eyes shut and slammed the blade down into the naip, piercing straight through and severing Eren's arm. The pain that shot through her body was enough to cause the titan to momentarily thrash about, but it quickly returned to an unconscious state. Armin then fell to his knees and leaned into the titan. Recalling Mikasa's story from Trost, Armin knew that he could be heard through the Titan. He just needed to be loud enough.

'Good,' Armin thought. 'She's not dead, and she's at least somewhat conscious. Now comes the hard part...'

"Eren! Can you hear me?!" He called. "Wake up, already! We need you! If you stay like this, we're all going to die!"

" A-Armin...?"

-E-

Eren was sitting on the couch, wrapped in a warm blanket as his adopted sister, Mikasa, his mother, Carla, and his father, Grisha, were all in front of him. He blinked slowly and sleepily as he turned his head towards a window behind him, where he saw his best friend, Armin, banging on the window, with some figure shrouded in shadow standing behind him.

-A-

"Your mom! Think about her!" He said. "If you don't get up, she'll be torn apart!"

-E-

" Armin... What are you talking about?" He asked. "She's right here."

Eren looked ahead to see Mikasa and Carla washing dishes with bright smiles on their faces.

" Open your eyes. Mom's not in any danger."

-A-

"Eren... ! Eren **PLEASE!** " Armin begged as he continued to bang on the naip. "I know you're in there, LISTEN TO ME! If you don't do something, the monsters are going to **kill us!** "

-E-

" Armin... seriously, what are you talking about?" Eren asked. "I don't want to move anything... I'm perfectly fine here..."

Eren's eyes widened.

" It's not like I want to be a Scout," she said.

-A-

"Want..." Eren's titan grumbled softly, prompting Erwin and Armin's eyes to widen, as they realized it was working.

"That's it, Eren," Armin said. "You can do it! Do it, for me! Just wake up."

-E-

" Do you remember when we were kids? How we'd always talk about exploring the outside world together?" Armin said.

Eren gasped softly, the form of herself as a young boy gently morphing to fit that of a young girl instead.

" Frozen tundra that stretches to the skies, sand dunes, forests, oceans. The world that lie in my grandfather's book."

-A-

Erwin was nothing short of fascinated by what Armin spoke of, then looked down and saw Eren's broken limbs begin to heal.

"I'd always thought you'd outgrown that dream," Armin said. "I was sad that it didn't come up anymore. But then I realized, that you'd stopped talking about it because you didn't want me to join the scouts."

-E-

Eren's cheeks reddened slightly as she stood up, dropping the blanket altogether. Her fists tightened as it all began to come back to her. The walls being kicked in, the scouts, Gigan, the many hard-fought battles they'd been through.

" Tell me, honestly, even though your first step beyond the wall meant you'd experience hell on Earth, gambling against the possibility of dying like my parents... Why? Why throw caution to the wind and venture outside?"

Eren turned around with a look of disbelief that Armin could ask something like that.

" What kind of question is that? Don't play dumb, you and I both know why!"

-E-

"Because..."

Eren slammed her fist against the ground and slowly rose to her feet, Armin and Erwin swiftly climbing to her shoulders.

" I WAS BORN INTO THIS WORLD!"

She roared a roar so loud that it could be heard across the city. Mikasa stopped everything upon hearing it and looked back, a smile slowly stretching across her face as she pressed her scarf up to her face. Carla looked up, somewhat relieved to hear the roar of her child. If nothing else, at least Eren was alive. Armin and Erwin landed on Eren's shoulders as her roar came to an end.

"Eren, before you do anything, I need you to listen!" Armin said.

Eren looked down to her right shoulder and nodded for Armin to continue.

"Whatever you do, don't leave your naip!" He continued, "We don't know if you'll be able to transform a second time without passing out now that you've already gone berserk!"

'Berserk?' Eren thought. 'What's he talking about?'

"What... do you... mean?" Eren asked.

"I'll explain later, but the point is, you need to make do with this form right now!"

Eren nodded, then looked to Erwin. "Commander... orders?"

"According to our new ally, the Human Vapor, there are five Adult Zillas at large and countless juveniles assisting them. In your berserk state, I noticed that you appeared to be far more powerful than you were previously, strong enough to seriously wound one of the adults. However, your blind, rage-fueled assault was ineffective against a full group of them." He then looked Eren in the eyes. "However, you did demonstrate an ability that will be of far greater assistance to us. The ability to harden your skin, similarly to how I've heard Annie Leonheart was able to."

Eren's eyes widened as Erwin continued.

"While you were fighting them, one of them unleashed a blast of flames from their mouth, however, despite it burning the rest of your body, your arms, which were hardened during the assault, remained unharmed. If you are able to use that hardening ability at will, we may have a chance at defeating them."

Eren looked down at her hand, then turned it over. She squinted for a moment, trying to get it to do something, and eventually, it did. It

hardened, but not into the crystal texture like Annie's, or even the one she had from her berserk mode. Instead, for whatever reason, her hardening took on a stone-like texture similar to that of the walls. She looked at her other hand and hardened it, and found that it took on a crystalline texture. She found this very strange but chose not to question it for now, as this meant that they had a chance in this battle.

Erwin then jetted off of Eren and towards Marlo and Hitch, with Eren and Armin following behind him. After finding them with Serizawa and Carla, he asked them a question that they found rather odd, however, Serizawa had a pretty good idea of what he was planning.

"How much gunpowder does the MP base here have in storage?" He asked.

Huang and the Scouts flew through the air in hot pursuit of the Zillas as they tore through Stohess. They also had to swoop down to the ground, however, in order to kill the Baby Zillas on the ground. They were able to save a few lives as a result, but far more people were killed. As they continued trying to damage the Zilla, three Baby Zillas jumped off of her back and attacked Levi, one of them landing on him. He managed to kill it, but wasn't able to get airborne again in time and landed on a house, getting knocked out cold in the process.

"CAPTAIN!" Jean shouted. He then looked back and gritted his teeth in frustration.

The Scouts managed to swoop around the Zilla, grappling from dorsal plate to dorsal plate before eventually swinging down to her eyes. Before they could attack it, she clenched them shut, which left her vulnerable to an attack from Huang which stunned her momentarily. He tried to keep up his assault, however, the Zilla quickly recovered and ran right through him.

However, as she continued running, she suddenly yelped in pain as she suddenly felt something sharp stab into her ankle. Mikasa

landed on a building and gripped her scarf as she saw Eren using hardened claws on her hands and feet to climb up the side of the Zilla's leg with a bundle of barrels on her back wrapped around her shoulders with rope. Huang saw Eren climbing her and helped keep the Zilla off her by slamming blasts of mist into her face with the force of a hurricane.

Eren soon reaches the Zilla's back and undid the straps on her shoulders. She then looked down at Armin as he climbed off of her, a lit torch in his hand.

"Remember Eren, we have to make sure it's in a place we know will kill it before we detonate it," he said. "This is all the gunpowder that the MPs had available to them, so we need to make it count."

"Back of the head then...?" Eren asked.

"Seems like our best bet. Now let's go!"

Eren began running across the giant monster's back, the barrels slung over her shoulder. She occasionally stumbled and leaned against one of the dorsal spines for support as she felt Zilla rock back and forth, before continuing forwards. As they continued forwards, however, Armin turned around when he heard the roars of Baby Zillas. Upon looking behind them, he found that they were climbing up and approaching them.

"Eren! Keep moving! I'll hold them off!"

"Armin... Let me... Help you..."

"No, Eren. You're the only one who can stop it! Now go!"

Eren wanted desperately for Armin to come with her. She knew that if Armin died here, she wouldn't be able to get him back. However, before Armin could jump in and fight the baby Zillas, Mikasa and Jean swooped down and killed two of them. They then saw Marlo

rocket up and fire a rifle, shooting one of them in the head and causing it to fall off to its death.

"Mikasa! Jean!"

"Erwin told us the plan," Jean said. "You two keep going! We can hold them off!"

Armin and Eren nodded and kept moving forwards. Jean and Mikasa began ripping through a hoard of the Baby Zillas, while Marlo kept his distance and provided cover fire for them. The Baby Zillas fell one by one, however with a roar from Zilla, more of them began climbing up to replace the ones that fell. This combined with the Scouts having to use their gas sparingly meant it would only be a matter of time until they were defeated, and Zilla knew this, so she didn't even bother shaking Eren and Armin off, because she knew she already won.

That was her last mistake.

Suddenly, she felt Eren sink her claws into the back of her head and grunted. On her head, Eren had hardened her entire body, save for her naip, which she emerged from, before jumping off with Armin as he threw the torch and called to the others.

"EVERYONE GET OFF!" He cried as he and Eren leaped to safety.

Mikasa, Jean, and Marlo heeded his warning and jumped off, however, Mikasa ended up being attacked by a Baby Zilla in the air. She managed to kill it but was left with three deep scratches over her left eye, rendering it useless. Jean meanwhile saw that his landing was flooded with Baby Zillas, so he had to get to safer ground, in the process breaking off from the group.

The barrels left behind quickly ignited and detonated all at once, creating a powerful explosion that ruptured the back of the Zilla's skull and caused the ground to rumble. She stumbled forwards briefly, before collapsing to the ground, her eyes glazed over, blood

rushing out of the back of her head like a red waterfall. But there were no celebrations to be had just yet, as there were still four more Zillas to deal with, and they just ran out of gunpowder.

-L-

Levi woke up on a roof, hoisting himself back to his feet and preparing to join the battle again. As he was about to take off, he took a look down, and he saw the reason why there was no evacuation. The gate to the interior was being guarded by a pack of Baby Zillas. Piles of the bloody bones of eaten humans were lining the streets, as well as the broken weapons of soldiers and the corpses of Baby Zillas who fell during the battle that took place here. It was clear to him at this point that this wasn't just a losing battle, but a losing battle that they wouldn't be able to escape from, especially when they were already starting to run out of fuel.

"CAPTAIN!" Mike called as he swooped down to Levi's side.

"Mike, status update," Levi ordered.

"We managed to kill it, but then the little ones arrived, and in the chaos, Mikasa lost an eye, and we lost Jean in the city."

Levi growled, then reached into his bag.

"Sir, what are you doing?"

Levi pulled out a flair gun and pointed it above his head while covering his ear. "I'm calling Gigan again. You go find Jean."

"Understood."

Mike then took off while Levi quickly shot the acoustic round. He then heard screeching beneath him and looked down to see a pack of Baby Zillas that were going to try and kill him writhing in agony and covering their bleeding ears. Levi took this opportunity to carve

through each of them, but after finishing and landing back on the roof, there was still no sign of Gigan.

'Where the hell is that thing?' Levi thought.

However, while the round didn't summon Gigan, it did summon the attention of a different monster. Levi looked up as he saw two of the adult Zillas emerge from their camouflage and loom over him, both with vicious grins on their faces. Levi, for once, actually had a look of fear on his face, as one of the Zillas lunged for him.

However, just before Levi was devoured, a gigantic, black mass of metal crashed into both of the Zillas, and sent them tumbling down the street. Levi was relieved to see that Gigan had arrived to aid them finally, but that relief turned to mortal terror when he saw the sorry state Gigan was in.

Sparks flew out of him, his jaw lazily hung open, his wings were torn asunder, and one of his arms was missing. The lights on Gigan briefly flickered on, but a sudden pulse of energy from the sky caused his systems to shut down once again. He tried to prop himself back up, only for a winged, grey monster to swoop down and slam into him, knocking him back to his knees. This was followed by another energy pulse and another slam. Soon, twelve of these monsters began circling around the city, all of them using their abilities to prevent Gigan from using his abilities as Battra slowly descended from the clouds.

Battra's eyes glowed purple and two Prism Beams fired down from them and onto Gigan, causing him to howl in agony and collapse. He then unleashed an alpha call, and all the Baby Zillas began to swarm Gigan, crawling all over him and scratching at his body, slowly picking him apart scratch by scratch. As Gigan was being torn apart by the Zillas and Mutos, and whittled down further by the Baby Zillas, Battra began finishing what the Zillas started, laying waste to entire city blocks just by flying over them and creating hurricane winds strong enough to rip entire houses apart.

Levi fell to his knees as Battrra decimated the entire city, leaving only fire and debris in his wake when suddenly, he was blasted to the ground by a beam of green Atomic Breath. Levi, Gigan, and all the other monsters and people stopped and looked up to the top of the wall as they saw another Zilla. But this one was unlike the others. Her eyes flashed green and she proceeded to unleash a roar that echoed across the island.

The princess had come to save the knights.

-Reviews-

Guest account: "Lol"

LMAO

Drosera68: "Mina, Nooooo XD"

Don't know why you put an XD at the end of that, but okay.

Battle in Stohess part 2

Isabella remained perched on top of the wall, her dorsal spines flashing menacingly as she slowly crept across it like a cat on the top of a fence. She narrowed her gaze as Battra rose back up, before perching himself on top of a mountain of burning rubble. He fired a pair of prism beams out of his eyes, aimed at the wall. Isabella quickly jumped off right as the lasers hit, and she then landed right in Stohess. Battra unleashed an Alpha Call, controlling the minds of all the Zillas and Baby Zillas.

[Spawn of the King, I command thee: rip the rogue Zilla to pieces!]

Isabella laughed as they all began approaching her. As one of them lunged for her, she spun around, smacking her in the side with her tail, cracking her spine, and sending her into a nearby building, before unleashing her atomic breath, blowing up both the building and the Zilla with no remorse. She then stomped on a pack of the Baby Zillas, before grabbing another one of her sisters by the throat, slamming her to the ground, mounting her, and tearing her flesh to ribbons with her claws.

Battra scoffed in frustration and smacked the other two Zillas out of the way before assaulting Isabella with his prism beams, leaving a scorch mark on her hide. She quickly burrowed underground, practically swimming through the earth. Her dorsal spines were the first to breach the surface as she emerged next to Gigan. She proceeded to shoot down the Mutos one by one. Battra launched himself towards her to try and stop her before all the Mutos fell, but was suddenly stopped by a shotgun beam blast to the underbelly, courtesy of Gigan, who had rapidly recovered from the EMP bombardment and was already regenerating from all the damage.

{Time for round two, Battra,} Gigan snarled, his visor glowing and heating up.

[So be it,] Battra replied, his eyes doing the same.

Prism Beams and Particle Beams clashed as Gigan and Battra closed the distance and clashed at the center, causing an explosion that knocked them to opposite sides of the city and caused the walls to crack from the mighty burst of energy. Gigan was the first to shake off the explosion, and rocketed towards Battra, shoving his chainsaw hands into him and slowly digging into his abdomen, slowly ripping through his exoskeleton and causing him to roar in agony. Gigan lapped up all that pain with a grin on his face, but then Battra narrowed his eyes while screaming and stabbed Gigan in the stomach with the pincers on his abdomen, discharging energy through them and causing Gigan to release his hold on Battra, allowing him to take to the skies and fire a volley of Prism beams, which Gigan blocked with his forcefield.

While they were fighting, Isabella was cleaning the streets of the Baby Zillas while squeezing the neck of the final adult Zilla, who was desperately clawing at her hand to no effect. Isabella proceeded to throw the Zilla at the last Muto, knocking it out of the sky, before marching through the streets as Baby Zillas fell at her feet, with the Scouts following her, picking off any that escaped her wrath. The few MP soldiers who had survived the initial assault of the Zillas watched in awe and confusion as the far more powerful and benevolent Isabella liberated the city of the Zillas she appeared so similar to.

Hitch, Marlo, Serizawa, and Carla eventually reunited, with Mikasa, Armin, and Eren joining them. Mikasa and Armin leaped off of Eren's shoulders to hug Carla, tears rolling down their eyes. Or, eye, in Mikasa's case.

"Oh, Mikasa, your eye..." Carla gasped.

"It's nothing I wasn't prepared for," she said.

"Hold on," Serizawa said as he approached Mikasa. "Let me have a look at that."

Serizawa tilted Mikasa's head up to look him in the eye as he observed the wound carefully. She winced as he opened the damaged eyelid to look inside, but managed to suck up the pain.

"It doesn't seem to be infected, thankfully..." he said. "But you won't be able to use that eye again."

He proceeded to take a knee and fish through his bag. Eventually, he pulled out some medicine and bandages, then pulled Mikasa aside so he could treat her injury.

As Mikasa was being treated by Serizawa, Eren, at the allowance of Levi, knelt before her mother and steam billowed from her naip as she began to pull herself free. Carla's eyes widened when she saw Eren emerge from her titan, Mikasa helping her out of it. She looked so different from when Carla last saw her, namely due to the fact that **she** was no longer a **he**.

"E-Eren?" Carla stuttered, her hand over her mouth. "I-is that really you?"

Eren sighed softly, a bit relieved that her mom at least recognized her. She nodded and pulled out the key from beneath her shirt as proof.

"Yeah... it's me, mom," She replied. "A lot has changed since we last saw eachother."

"I can see that," Carla replied, trying to keep the tone light. "If you don't mind me asking, what happened to you?"

"That's kind of a long story. One that I don't even fully remember," she said as she rubbed the back of her head. "But I'll try my best to explain what happened. Mikasa and Armin can fill in the gaps in my story."

Carla nodded and placed her hands in her lap, listening to Eren's story. Serizawa also listened, curious to learn more about Eren's power.

Gigan slammed hard into Battrra and pushed him away from Stohess. The two streaked across the sky, both dishing out blow after blow to each other, before quickly landing outside the walls. Battrra stood up on his six legs but was kicked in the chin, cutting it and launching him into the air. He did a flip before finding his balance and swooped around Gigan while firing crimson Energy Orbs from his horns, which passed through Gigan's force field and exploded on impact. Gigan grunted in pain as they hit him and began flying out of the way while retaliating with missiles.

{Pelops, send me a blueprint for Markelite towers!} Gigan said as he fired blades out of his chest and at Battrra, who dodged each shot of them, then rammed into Gigan, causing them to crash into wall Maria.

" Confirmed. Blueprints will be complete in 2 minutes!" Pelops said before Gigan's HUD glitched out as Battrra began discharging energy through his legs and pincers.

Gigan Shotgun Blasted Battrra in the face, before blasting him again with a beam from the sole of his foot. The two then flew up into the air and clashed several times, chainsaw to wing. Eventually, Battrra surrounded himself in a purple aura and slammed into Gigan, blasting him down to the ground once again, this time just in front of the gates of Stohess. He groaned audibly as sparks flew out of his severely damaged abdomen.

" Be careful, Gigan!" Pelops pleaded. *"One more hit like that could snap you right in half!"*

{Yeah, but, the thing is... } Gigan watched as his damaged torso rapidly mended itself. **{I can regenerate from that. I'm guessing he can't.}** He said as he revved up his chainsaw hands.

[Hey, Gigan! Are you alright?] Isabella asked while leaning against the wall.

{I'm fine, Isabella,} Gigan said, before being assaulted by a flurry of Prism Beams.

He quickly dodged them and then sprayed down Nano Metal, which quickly formed into seven Markelite FOP towers that fired blue beams at Battrra, while Isabella fired her Atomic Breath. Battrra dodge rolled out of the way of all the beams, before swooping down over the city. As he flew, however, he briefly sensed the presence of the Attack Titan, and it gave him an idea.

-E-

After finishing her story and embracing her mother, Eren, Mikasa, and Armin were swinging through the air on their ODM gear to regroup with the other Scouts. As they approached, however, Eren suddenly collapsed onto a roof, stumbling about for a moment before slowly rising to her feet. Mikasa and Armin soon landed behind her to make sure she was okay.

"I think I'm fine," she said while rubbing her forehead.

"Are you sure, Eren?" Mikasa asked. "Do you think you need to sit down and rest?"

"Maybe. But I have no idea what that wa-" Eren suddenly yelped and clutched her head as she fell to her knees.

"EREN!" They both shouted as they ran to her side.

Eren clenched her eyes shut as she felt a splitting migraine which only grew worse and worse by the second. She felt as though her head was about to explode. Like something was about to burst out of it.

No...

Like something was trying to break **into** it!

Suddenly, she opened her eyes and found herself in a black void, her migraine now gone. She looked around frantically, wondering where she was. She called out to Armin and Mikasa, and her voice echoed throughout the void. A chill coursed through her body and she began to shiver, clutching her arms for warmth as she continued to look around. Eventually, she looked up and saw two massive, purple orbs above her, looking down upon her with sinister intent. She then watched Battra emerge from the darkness, still looking down on her as he began to speak.

[Eren Jaeger: Secondborn of Grisha Jaeger, firstborn of Carla Jaeger, your blood is tainted with the filth of humanity. However, unlike your ilk, you serve a purpose.]

"Wh-wh-what do you w-w-want?" Eren asked, still freezing cold.

[The power of the titans flows through your veins. This makes you valuable to me.]

"What a-are you t-t-talking about?"

[The power of the nine is not humanity's power, but a fragment of the power of the divine moth. As such, I am able to control it, as well as whoever uses its power, making them my obedient minions.]

Eren's eyes widened in shock, but that shock immediately turned to a look of rage and determination. "No!" She replied definitely. "You can't control me! I am **no one's** slave! DO YOU HEAR ME?!"

Battra sighed in annoyance. **[Your resistance is futile, you annoying little creature.]**

Battra's voice echoed through her mind, but she was undeterred and began approaching him. However, suddenly, shackles sprung up from the ground and wrapped around her ankles and wrists, pulling

her back, away from Battara. She reached out desperately to try and do something, anything to stop Battara from doing this to her, but it was all in vain.

[You can not deny the will of Battara.]

-E-

As Armin knelt next to Eren, he noticed her eyes snap open, and for a brief moment, he saw her expression change to one similar to the one he saw on Ymir's face back in the barracks of Trost. She looked towards him, and he heard her whisper something so uncharacteristic of her that it made his blood run cold.

"Armin... please, help me."

He then watched that look fade away as her emerald eyes suddenly faded to a deep purple with bright white lines surrounding her retinas. Her expression then changed to one that he had never seen before, and one which frightened him greatly, as he could tell just by looking into her eyes that Eren Jaeger, his best friend since he was a child, was no longer present.

Armin jumped back in surprise as Eren slowly stood up, causing Mikasa to take a few steps back. Eren slowly looked around, observing the battle between Battara and Gigan in the distance, as well as Isabella and the rest of the scouts picking off the Baby Zillas, her expression never changing even for a second.

"Eren? Are you okay?" Mikasa asked.

Eren slowly looked at her with the same vacant expression she gave Armin. Mikasa gasped when she saw Eren's face, and in particular, her eyes, immediately realizing that something was wrong, but unable to tell that Eren wasn't there until it was too late.

[Attack.]

Eren ran at Mikasa and punched her right in the face. Mikasa fell to the ground and placed her hand on her bruised cheek, horrified at what had just happened. Eren didn't stop there however and immediately proceeded to straddle Mikasa and pummel her while she was down until Armin came up behind her and hooked his arms underneath hers. Eren managed to throw Armin off, then saw Mikasa trying to climb back to her feet. As Armin recovered, he watched in horror as Eren kicked Mikasa in the jaw, sending her back to the ground with a bleeding lip. Armin proceeded to grab Eren by the jacket and press his forehead against hers.

"EREN STOP IT!" He shouted. "I KNOW YOU'RE STILL IN THERE! WHATEVER'S HAPPENING TO YOU, YOU NEED TO FIGHT IT! YOU CAN'T LET IT BEAT YOU!"

Eren froze for a moment, allowing Mikasa to get into a sitting position. However, she was in too much mental agony to stand up and simply knelt there, motionless.

"PLEASE, EREN! I KNOW YOU'D NEVER DO THIS TO HER, SO DON'T LET IT MAKE YOU!"

[Kill him.]

"Stop it..." She muttered.

She saw a gleam of hope in Armin's eyes, which quickly faded when she clenched her eyes shut again, tears welling up in her eyes. Armin desperately tried to pull his best friend back, but it was all in vain, as she was suppressed once more.

[Kill him!]

Eren headbutted Armin, causing him to recoil and let go. She then pulled him in and threw him into Mikasa, knocking them both over. Armin stood up once again and took a defensive pose as Eren began approaching.

"Come on, Eren," he said, spitting out a bloody tooth. "I know you can beat it."

Eren sucker punched Armin in the gut, then proceeded to repeatedly punch him in the face, blood squirting out of his nose and a wound on his cheek, as tears streamed from both their eyes. Eventually, Armin fell to his knees and looked up into Eren's eyes as she grabbed one of her blades and raised it up over Armin's head.

"Ha... ha..." Armin huffed as he looked up at her. "This thing really has you beat, huh...? I understand..." A bitter smile crept across Armin's face as he lowered his head. "I just hope one day... you'll get to see the world for me..."

Tears began to stream from Eren's eyes as she lowered her blade down. The sound of a blade cutting through flesh filled the ears of everyone in the area. Blood splattered all over Armin as Eren's blade clattered to the ground... as did the arm carrying it.

Eren clutched her bleeding wound where her arm once was before being kicked down and impaled by Mikasa. She then released her blade and helped Armin to his feet.

"Come on! We need to go before she transforms!" She said.

Armin looked back at Eren as she gripped the blade with one hand. He looked into her eyes and saw that one had turned green once again.

"GO!" She screamed through gritted, bloody teeth. "I CAN'T HOLD HIM BACK MUCH LONGER!"

Armin and Mikasa heeded Eren's warning and ran. As they left, Battra took control once again, and Eren lifted herself off the blade, an electric aura starting to form around her.

[No. Don't bother with them. They are irrelevant. You have proven your loyalty. Now, I want you to eliminate the rogue Zilla

instead.]

"But master, my titan form is far too small and weak to defeat her."

[In your current state, yes, it is. However, I will temporarily grant you access to the full power of the Founding Titan. Additionally, I will allow you to use the omen state of the Attack Titan, as you have done in the past.]

"Thank you, master. Thy will be done," Eren said as lightning struck down upon her.

The Scouts and MPs stopped and looked back as they saw Eren's titan form. However, this form was much larger than her normal titan form. It was about the same height as Gigan. Its body looked to be in a berserk state, its hair was far longer than usual, nearly reaching down to her hips, and its face was completely skeletal, save for its eyes, which had two small, purple pinpricks in them.

"What the hell?" Levi muttered before Mikasa and Armin arrived before him and the others.

"Something's very wrong with Eren!" Mikasa shouted.

"What happened?" Erwin asked.

"We're not sure," Armin explained. "All we know is that she suddenly started having severe migraines, and then Eren's eyes suddenly changed color and she began attacking us!"

"But we're sure it's not her fault!" Mikasa quickly pointed out. "We believe something must be controlling her!"

Suddenly, the ground began to rumble as Eren began charging in their direction. Everyone braced for impact, however, Eren barreled right past them and instead ran towards Isabella, going in for a tackle which Isabella immediately intercepted with a tail swipe to the face. While Isabella was readying herself to pounce, Eren hardened her

fists and calves and went in to strike Isabella in retaliation. Isabella pounced over Eren and onto her back, prompting them to wrestle on the ground, trading deviating scratches and punches to each other's faces.

Levi pulled out one of his blades and pointed it at Eren. "All of you! Focus on Jaeger! We need to eliminate the threat before-"

"Wait!" Erwin interrupted. He then approached Armin and Mikasa. "What is your evidence that Eren is being controlled?"

Armin gulped nervously. "W-well, it's not much, b-but she did say something to me before she started acting like this, and then something else while we were fleeing..."

"What did she say?" Erwin asked.

"S-she said, 'help me.' Then later, she said, 'I can't hold him back forever.' Both times, at least one of her eyes changed back to their normal color."

Erwin nodded, then turned to everyone. "Listen up!" He said. "Our goal is to cut down Eren's titan and remove her from the naip of the neck, however, we must make sure that she is alive! To do so, you must cut the naip open, as that is where she resides! This will not be an easy task, however, we can not risk losing the greatest hope for humanity, be it through her escaping, or her killing one of our greatest allies! NOW MOVE OUT!"

The Scouts and MPs did as they were told, zooming into action to save Eren.

Eren grabbed Isabella by the tail and dragged her along the ground before swinging her over her head and slamming her down onto her back. She then swung her back upwards, and then back down onto her back again and again. Eventually, Isabella lurched forwards and sank her claws into Eren's back while she was swinging her, then

pulled her tail free, wrapped it around her neck, and dragged her to the ground. Isabella then jumped onto Eren's chest and ripped her jaw off. She was then punched in the jaw with a hardened fist, knocking her off, but she quickly recovered and immediately tried to bite Eren's leg off. Eren managed to harden her leg just before she could sink her teeth into it, then kicked her into the wall, revealing one of the Colossal titans inside of it. Steam billowed out of Eren's face as her jaw quickly regenerated and she snapped it back into place.

Isabella grunted angrily and rose to her feet, charging up her Atomic Breath, when Eren suddenly let out a roar that caused the titan to wrap its arms around her neck. Isabella blasted its head off, only for Eren to roar again, summoning several more from the wall, in the process completely destroying the border between Stohess and the interior. People screamed and fled in terror as they watched the battle take place.

Gigan watched this from above in horror, wondering what had happened to Eren. Suddenly, he heard Battra laughing mirthfully and slowly looked over at him, an enraged scowl slowly forming on his face. Battra in turn looked back at Gigan with a smug and knowing look on his face.

Enraged, Gigan slashed Battra across the face, then rammed into him, piercing his thorax with one of the metal spikes protruding from his head. The people of the interior watched Battra and Gigan twirl through the air before Battra knocked Gigan down onto the Temple of the Black Angel, which he landed safely on top of, before launching off of it, his beam locked with Battra's, until he amped up the power, forcing Battra's prism beams back and knocking him out of the sky.

Before Battra could land, Gigan grabbed him with his tail claw and dragged him through the sky, then threw him outside Stohess. Eren was distracted by this as she watched Gigan dive down on top of Battra. She inhaled to roar again in an attempt to defend Battra, but she was suddenly blasted in the back with Isabella's atomic breath.

Smoke billowed out of a gaping hole in her torso as she panted loudly, before turning around and hardening her entire leg a mere fraction of a millisecond before it could be blasted off.

Eren inhaled again and prepared to roar, but suddenly, Mikasa and Levi swooped by, slicing the tendons around her jaw and causing it to fall limp. Her eyes began following them as they and the rest of the scouts began swinging around her. She tried to reach out for them, only for Isabella to jump in and tackle her and restrain her against the wall. She then tore off Eren's jaw and sank her teeth into her forehead, wrenching it off of her body in one quick movement. After Isabella ripped off Eren's head, Mikasa saw Eren sticking out of the naip and tried to go in to save her, but before she could, Eren quickly encased herself and her titan's neck in crystal hardening, preventing Mikasa from ripping her out. Eren's eyes followed Mikasa before she eventually grabbed her out of the sky. She then grabbed Isabella by the neck and threw her off, before running through the streets as she waited for her head to regenerate.

The Scouts tried to chase Eren but were taken off guard when Battra suddenly swooped low through the city, creating a cloud of dirt and rubble which blinded and disoriented all of them. Battra then fired energy orbs at Isabella to keep her off of Eren, and when Gigan tried to attack Battra, Eren jumped in the way. Her simply being in front of him made Gigan hesitate long enough for Battra to shoot him down with Prism Beams and Energy Orbs at the same time, before using his Excell Dash against Isabella, hitting her with such immense force that it knocked all the air out of her lungs and launched her straight through the wall. She landed against Wall Rose, writhing in agony and coughing up blood, as she felt that her ribs were shattered.

Eren's head soon regenerated fully, and she roared once again, causing all the walls around Stohess to fall and Colossal titans to begin either approaching Isabella, or attacking Gigan and the humans.

People fled through the streets of the interior as one Colossal Titan marched through the city unimpeded. The old, poorly cared-for

cannons were so weak that it was like trying to tear down a house with spit wads. It simply walked right through them, setting fire to everything in its path as it grew closer and closer to the capital. Battra began assisting it, decimating the capital city easily, with all of his foes distracted in some way, shape, or form. It seemed like an absolute victory for them...

Until one man who they didn't account for suddenly cut Mikasa free from Eren's grasp, severing all of her fingers. He then glided across her chest, then sliced off all of her fingers on her other hand so she wouldn't be able to grab him or Mikasa. Eventually, he landed on her shoulder, weapons were drawn as they locked eyes with each other.

"You really let us down, you suicidal maniac."

It was Jean.

Eren swung her hand to smack Jean, but he jumped off of her before she could hit him, and proceeded to swing by her naip, pretending to cut at it, while Mikasa landed several strikes at her Ankle, which was eventually enough to send her to her knees. Battra noticed her being downed by Jean and Mikasa and called out to her again.

[Eren! The Founding Titan gives you the power to turn humans into titans with just a roar! Use that ability now!]

Eren tried to follow her master's orders, but hesitated, allowing Mikasa to remove Eren from her naip, and take her down to the ground. Her eyes were closed when they landed, but Mikasa was relieved that she was at least alive. However, she then heard Jean land behind her, his swords still drawn, clearly intending to kill Eren. Mikasa, in response, pulled out her own swords and aimed them at Jean.

"Don't you dare..." She growled.

"You've gotta be kidding me, Mikasa!" Jean said. "You're gonna defend her after she just tried to kill you?!"

"It wasn't her fault!" Mikasa shouted. "She's being mind controlled, probably by Battr!"

"And how do you know that?!"

"She's clearly trying to fight it! She had plenty of time to kill me, but she never did! I know she's still in there, we just need to get her out!"

Suddenly, Eren's eyes opened. She immediately sank her teeth into her hand again. Jean tackled Mikasa out of the way as Eren transformed into a 120-meter-titan again. She then looked down at the two of them and extended her hand, about to crush both of them, when she suddenly heard someone call out to her.

"EREN!"

Eren turned around and looked down the street, seeing Carla at the end of it, alone. She was un-intimidated by her stature, or the threatening aura she was giving off, and spoke gently, but firmly, hoping to get through to her daughter.

"Armin told me everything," she said. "Eren, what has that monster done to you?"

"MOM!" Mikasa called out as she reached out for her, being held back by Jean.

"What is my baby being turned into? What happened to the boy with dreams of creating a better world for everyone he loves? Who would risk life and limb to fight for everyone's freedom? Who would throw himself into the jaws of a titan to save his best friend?" Carla began to weep softly. "What happened to my baby?"

Eren slowly looked down at her hands, trembling as tears began to well up in her eyes.

"Eren... please come back to me. Come back to us."

Eren then saw Armin step out of an alleyway next to her. His injuries hadn't healed yet, allowing Eren to see what she had done to him. The bruises, the cut cheek, the black eye, all of it. And within her titan, Eren began to break down. However, her sobbing stopped when she heard Battra's voice in her head once again.

[Kill them.]

Eren slowly turned to them, that malevolent look in her eyes returning.

"EREN! PLEASE, DON'T DO IT!" Mikasa screamed.

[Abandon your humanity, and kill them all!]

Eren froze, her eyes dimming, becoming vacant husks with nothing in them.

[KILL THEM, EREN! YOU CAN NOT DENY THE WILL OF BATTRA!]

Eren slowly stood up, turned around... and screamed,

" NO!"

Suddenly, all the colossal titans stopped what they were doing and began charging toward Battra at remarkable speeds, leaping onto him as he tried to fly up to avoid them. Battra cut through them all before seeing Eren running at him, screaming furiously. As she approached, flesh began to form around her face, causing her Founding Titan form to look more like an enlarged version of her normal titan form. Before she could reach him, her titan body, as well as all the colossal titans surrounding them, suddenly exploded into harmless clouds of steam, and Eren was launched out. She managed to zip onto the top of the wall with her ODM gear, finding herself face-to-face with Battra.

[YOU ARE UNWORTHY OF THE FOUNDING TITAN, YOU DISGUSTING HUMAN!]

"GO TO HELL, YOU BASTARD!"

[You first...]

However, before Battara could fire his prism beams at Eren, Gigan launched a blade right into Battara's eye, causing him to scream in agony before Isabella emerged from her camouflage state and jumped on top of him.

Battara tried to fly away, but he couldn't escape their combined onslaught as Gigan and Isabella began taking turns tearing at his exoskeleton. He managed to get Isabella off, but Gigan continued his assault. Gigan eventually sawed off both of Battara's wings, before stomping on his abdomen and shoving his chainsaw hand right through his thorax, pelting his back with missiles while doing so.

Battara coughed up blood as he yelled desperately at Gigan, **[YOU... CAN'T... DO THIS... TO ME! I AM THE GUARDIAN OF EARTH! WHAT WILL BECOME OF IT WITHOUT ME!?!]**

{It'll be free. That's what.}

Battara screamed one last agonizing scream as Gigan sawed him in half, his blood splattering everywhere like lava from a volcano. Gigan and Isabella then roared victoriously as all the soldiers on the ground cheered for them.

After all, was done, and the battlefield was calm, repairs immediately began, starting with Gigan spraying Nano Metal around Stohess and in front of the interior. The Nano Metal quickly formed into new, repaired walls. Eren swung down from the walls and hugged Carla, Mikasa, and Armin tightly, as the Scouts began gathering together around them. Eren looked up from the group hug and saw all the scouts surrounding them with their blades drawn. She held a hand in

front of Mikasa, preventing her from retaliating, before raising her hands in surrender.

" THEY DID IT!" Ymir and Frieda cheered while hugging each other.

Annie, who was leaning against the tree away from them, smiled slightly. After all that Battra had done to humanity, her home, and her family, it was satisfying to see him lying in defeat, and especially to hear that scream. However, as the girls celebrated Battra's death, they stopped when they heard a voice echo through out paths.

[YMIR!]

Ymir yelped in terror as she heard Battra's voice, and all of them, even Annie, shuddered as Battra appeared in the form of a purple specter flying above them, his rage radiating off of him.

[I COMMAND YOU TO REVOKE EREN'S POWERS! REMOVE PARIDIS' MEMORIES! MAKE ALL HUMANS FORGET BASIC BODILY FUNCTIONS! DO IT NOW! DO IT NOW!]

Ymir winced as sand began to swirl around her. She clutched her head as she tried to fight Battra's orders.

[No.]

Suddenly, Ymir stopped, her command halted in its tracks. Battra was confused by this until an orange ball of light began to rise behind him and swell.

[You and I are meant to protect the balance of nature, brother. Instead, you chose to forsake your sacred mission, and imprison me while I was vulnerable, all just so you could take out your petty revenge on humanity.] The ball of light said as it began to take on a shape similar to Battra's.

[S-sister, you don't understand! The humans, th-they would have destroyed the world if I didn't do somethi-]

[Enough.]

The ball of light morphed into a moth similar to Battra, but with a softer, fluffier, more friendly appearance. Battra shielded his eyes from the bright light, before watching as chains rose from the ground and began to drag him down to the ground.

[Your reign of terror is over, brother,] she said.

[NO! STOP THIS! YOU CAN'T! MOTHRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!]

As Battra disappeared beneath the sand, the goddess slowly lowered herself to the ground and landed right in front of the three girls.

[Hello, Ymir. It's good to see you again,] she said, before looking over to the other two. ***[Frieda, Annie, it's a pleasure to meet you two.]***

Frieda nervously pointed up at the goddess, while Annie simply fainted. "I-is that...?"

Ymir smiled as she gazed reverently at her old ally. "Mothra."

-G-

The seal was broken.

He could feel it.

In Mothra's haste to prevent her brother from winning, she had re-absorbed the sealing magic she used on this prison in order to fully restore her power. Now, whenever the claws of his underlings struck the crystalline walls of his cage, large pieces would crack and break off, allowing them to make much more rapid progress.

The king will soon be free.

The Beast Titan

-E-

"As you might imagine, we have many questions."

Erwin sat in the capital building, surrounded by Military Police, and facing the council of the inner walls at a table in a small, enclosed room, with a single window behind him. Despite ultimately saving Stohess and the interior, the damage done was immense, and Eren went completely out of control during the attack of Battrra, and he took full responsibility when confronted about it. Now, sitting in front of the council, he was left with one mission: convince them that it was all worth it.

"Firstly, how did you not know about the potential dangers that Eren Jaeger posed during this mission?" The head of the council asked.

"We were unaware of the true extent of Eren Jaeger's powers," Erwin replied. "She had never demonstrated abilities such as the ones she had shown off in Stohess. Previously, all of our tests concluded that her Titan's height was limited to only 15 meters in height, with abnormal strength for a titan, and a substantial increase in power when enraged. Clearly, we were wrong."

"Yes, and had it not been for Gigan, the price of your ignorance would be the loss of an entire chunk of Wall Rose," another member of the council chastised.

"As I said, none of us could have foreseen these events occurring."

"Excuses aren't going to un-burn my house," another councilman snarled.

"We have discovered recently that Battrra was in fact the culprit behind Eren's out-of-control behavior," Erwin said. "Of this, I have no

doubts. Now that Battara has been neutralized by Gigan, I am certain that this will not happen again."

"That's all well and good, however, that leads us to our next question," the head councilman said. "As you said, Battara has been rendered neutralized, but also entirely useless. Eren can no longer communicate with him for questioning, and even for recreational purposes, examination of the body has found that his meat is inedible to humans and farm animals alike, his exoskeleton is too durable to be harvested for tools or weapons, and too heavy to be moved via any other means, and his wings vanished into thin air as soon as they were severed."

"Yes, all of what you have just said is correct," Erwin said.

"So what I'm getting here, essentially, is that all of this was for nothing."

-E-

"Eren?" Carla said, holding her daughter's hand.

The two were in a room together, Eren sitting in a bed next to her mother, while Mikasa, Armin, and Serizawa all stood in the room with them. Armin and Mikasa's injuries had all been cleaned up and covered, with Mikasa now wearing an eyepatch matching Serizawa's. Carla gripped her daughter's hand tightly as she let out a concerned sigh.

"Are you feeling well?" She asked.

"Y-yeah, I'm fine," Eren replied. "In fact... it's weird how 'fine' I feel, considering what I went through."

"W-what did you go through, Eren?" Armin asked.

Eren's fists tightened, squeezing her mom's hand and the bedsheets. She let out an angered grunt as she thought back to

Batra appearing before her in her mind.

"That **bastard**..." She hissed, tears welling up in her eyes. "I wish I could have killed him."

"Eren-" Carla stopped when Eren let go of her hand and clutched her forehead.

"That entire time, I was doing everything he could to stop myself from killing you all," she said. "It took everything I had to make myself hesitate long enough for Mikasa to cut me out of my titan."

Eren clutched her shoulders as she continued to divulge her side of the story. "I felt... **violated** . It was the most horrifying experience I was ever forced to live through. At least when that titan was about to eat my mom, I wasn't the one who was about to do it!"

Armin was startled when Eren looked up into his eyes, tears streaking down from hers.

"When he made me nearly kill you... I wanted to kill myself so badly."

"EREN, STOP IT!" Carla cried as she lunged forwards out of her wheelchair, wrapping her arms around Eren as she continued to cry and clutch her shoulders.

"I couldn't stop," She muttered through her tears. "I couldn't control myself... I'm s-so sorry..."

"Eren, it's not your fault!" Carla said while pulling Eren's face towards hers. "We all know you weren't the one responsible for what happened!"

"Not necessarily," Serizawa interrupted, causing everyone to turn and face him. "The government likely won't listen to reason. Eren's existence is clearly inconvenient to them, so they'll no doubt take this opportunity to get her out of their hair for goo-"

Suddenly, Mikasa slammed Serizawa against a wall in a fit of blind panic and rage.

"M-MIKASA, LET HIM GO!" Armin screamed.

"STOP IT, MIKASA!" Carla cried.

"You misunderstand," Serizawa grunted. "I don't want her dead any more than you all do, but I can't foresee any way in which this situation goes well for her."

"I'd deserve it..." Eren muttered. Everyone turned back to look at her. "I'm nothing but a menace to everyone. I wanted to make things better for all of you, but all I've ever done is cause you more pain."

"Eren, you know that's not true," Carla said.

"Is it? All my life, I thought that I was a hero who was going to save humanity from the walls. But all I've done is cause everyone I care about more pain and suffering by dragging them into my bullshit!" Eren lowered her head in shame. "You were right about me, mom. I was never destined for greatness. I never should have had this power."

"Eren, look at me," Carla pulled Eren's face towards hers and looked her in the eyes, a single tear forming in hers. "No matter how much trouble you caused, I'll always love you. You were always special, just because you were born into this world. No one here blames you for what happened. It could have happened to any of us if we were in your shoes and the fact that you had the strength to fight back is nothing short of a miracle."

"Eren," Serizawa spoke up again, walking past Mikasa and Armin and taking a knee next to her bed. "The destruction that was caused was unavoidable. You were up against something beyond human comprehension. No normal human would have stood a chance against Battria, so even if I know for a fact that the government won't let you live, believe me when I say that they are in the wrong. You're

not a monster, and you're not a burden. You're just a person trying their best to do the right thing, just like everyone else."

Eren sat there in silence for a moment, the mood still somber and tense. Carla briefly smiled gratefully at Serizawa before continuing to embrace her daughter. Eventually, Carla and Seizawa left the room, and Mikasa quickly left to get Eren some food, giving Armin and Eren some time to themselves. Armin awkwardly rubbed his shoulder while Eren fiddled with her hair.

"So, um-" They both said at once, before stopping, Eren allowing Armin to go first.

"U-um, well I just wanted to know... w-what does it feel like to go berserk?" He had a different question he wanted to ask, but he didn't feel the courage to ask it.

Eren sighed softly and looked away. "I'm not really conscious when it happens. I just kind of let go, giving in to my rage and desire to slaughter my enemies."

"O-oh. I see," Armin replied. "W-what did you want to ask me?"

Eren's cheeks reddened slightly. "N-nothing."

Eren then looked back up and gasped softly when she saw Armin starting to weep before running up to Eren and embracing her. Eren's blush brightened before her lips curled into a smile. She closed her eyes and got up onto her knees so she could return Armin's embrace as he continued to sob over her shoulder.

"Shhh... It's okay, Armin. I'll never leave you again. I promise."

-E-

"For nothing?" Erwin asked sarcastically. "I believe this latest tragedy has moved us forward by leaps and bounds sir. So many things have happened these past few months that, not long ago, we would have

never even considered. From humans transforming into titans, to giant, mysterious beasts greater than even the titans. But now, we are not only aware of all these things, but we've also managed to capture two of our greatest enemies, the Colossal and Armored Titans, and kill two more, the Female Titan and Battra. Not to mention, we've made some powerful new allies, such as the fifth Titan shifter, Ymir, 'Zilla Ultima' for lack of an official name, and the Human Vapor."

Huang Meng, who had been floating outside the building, right next to the window, groaned softly to himself. He knew that his existence would be made public after these events, but it was still annoying nonetheless, as he now had a target on his back.

"And make no mistake, while Battra may have been the greatest threat to humanity, he was by no means the only one," Erwin continued. "There are more enemies out there. And together, we will hunt down every last one of them. The initiative is ours, and we swear to destroy all monsters!"

The Scout Regiment's recall to the capital and Eren's incarceration order were rescinded, much to the surprise, relief, and jubilation of the Jaeger family. Instead, they were tasked with watching over Reiner Braun and Bertholdt Hoover in their holding cells deep underground, where they kept constant watch over them day and night. They were also tasked with locating the Human Vapor and recruiting him to the Scout Regiment. Isabella Tatopoulos was declared too suspicious to be trusted by the council, due to her physical similarities to her sisters. Carla Jaeger and Daisuke Serizawa remained in the interior. Because Stohess was still under reconstruction, they and the MPs watching over them were moved to the Orvud district.

Little did anyone know the horrors the future had in store for them...

The Scouts soon arrived back at Utgard castle, the whole group worse for wear, but alive. While Mikasa separated from the group

and went to the mess hall, the others happened upon a little girl with long, brown hair wrapped in a ponytail walking down the halls, holding a clipboard, dressed in a white gown and brown jacket, and deep in conversation with Moblit. The girl couldn't have been older than 9 years old, yet she seemed to possess a striking amount of intellect when speaking, talking as though she was a fully grown woman.

"Honestly, how could we not have children's size Scout attire?" The little girl asked. "I mean, kids as young as fourteen to fifteen join the military regularly these days, it's only a matter of time really only a matter of time until we- on hello Erwin! Hi Levi!" She said, waving at the two men.

"Do I know you?" Levi asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Oh don't be like that, of course you know me!" She replied.

"No, I really don't," He said.

Erwin took a knee before her, his eyes widening as he began taking in all of her familiar features. "Hange? Is that you?"

Everyone's eyes widened, even Levi's. All except for Moblit's.

"Yepper's peppers! It's me!" Hange said as she placed her hands on her hips and smiled.

"What the hell happened to you?!" Jean shouted.

"Ah, right, this. Well, that's a bit of a long story..."

36 hours ago...

I was in the lab examining some of the things we had retrieved from Grisha's lab in the basement of Eren's house. We had yet to open the drawer because it turns out that we needed Eren's key to open that, and we don't want to risk damaging whatever was inside by busting the desk open. So instead, I decided to study the chemicals

we found in his basement. Among them was a lightly colored yellow and blue powder which gave off a faint glow.

Obviously, I was making sure to be cautious when examining a mysterious powder that no one's ever seen before, but then suddenly, I felt the ground starting to shake. Worried that we were experiencing a kaiju attack, I began packing everything. However, a sudden and rather powerful rumble knocked me right onto my butt and into the table I was working at, causing a beaker full of the powder to fall right on top of me, shattering and spreading its contents all over me, much of it even getting into my mouth.

I didn't feel anything unusual at first, however, after just a moment, I felt as though I was shrinking. I stood up, cleaned myself off, and ran out of the room, my clothes hanging more and more loosely off of me as I ran. By the time I had reached the bathroom, I was too short to even reach the mirror and had to climb up onto a step stool in order to see my reflection.

What greeted me was a face I had not seen since I was nine years old.

Today...

"Somehow, the powder that fell onto me had reversed my age by at least twenty years. However, the changes are somehow purely physical. My mind hasn't been altered in the slightest by this." Hange then looked up at her fellow Scouts. "So, anywho, how did your meeting in Sina go?"

Everyone was wide-eyed as they realized what caused this to happen to Hange. Erwin knelt before her again and gave her a stern look.

"Hange, we have a lot to discuss."

-M-

Meanwhile, Mikasa as Mikasa entered the mess hall, she was suddenly grabbed by the shoulders by Sasha, who ran up to her worriedly as soon as she entered.

"MIKASA, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU!?" She screamed, frantically voicing her concern over her friend's state.

Mikasa swiftly pulled her hands off of her. "I'm fine," she calmly replied.

"COMING BACK WITH ONE LESS EYE THAN WHEN YOU LEFT IS NOT WHAT I WOULD DEFINE AS '**FINE**' !" Sasha replied.

"If you would just calm down, I can explain what happened to me."

"HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO BE CALM AT A TIME LIKE THI-"

Mikasa suddenly reached into her bag and pulled out a piece of bread she brought back from the interior and shoved it into Sasha's mouth. This was enough to calm her down. After this, Mikasa pulled Sasha to the mess hall, sat her down, and began to explain everything. She explained how they encountered the Zillas in Stohess, and that one of them managed to slash out her eye. She decided not to explain the bruises on her face, hoping that explanation would suffice. It did, however much to Mikasa's surprise, it only made Sasha upset, as tears started to well up in her eyes.

"I should have been there..." she muttered.

"W-what?"

"I should have come with you," she said, her voice shaking as she spoke. "You saved my life twice, and you've always been such a good friend, and I... I never returned the favor like I should have... I'm s-so sorry Mikasa."

Mikasa wrapped her arm around Sasha's shoulder, this line of thinking all too fresh in her mind. "Sasha, this isn't your fault," she

said while briefly caressing her eye patch. "You shouldn't blame yourself for what happened."

"B-but if I were there, I could have-"

"If you were there, you would have gotten hurt too," she interrupted. "You may have even gotten killed, and I wouldn't be able to live with myself if you died, even if it was for my sake!"

"W-why?"

"I..." Mikasa blushed slightly, realizing what she just said. She pulled her scarf over her face as she remembered the drawing that little girl made.

"... don't know why. But I want to protect you..." Mikasa's blush increased, no longer able to be hidden by her scarf, as she remembered Sasha hugging her every time she saved her. She liked how warm it was, the feeling of their bodies up against each other, and how nice it felt just being that close to her.

"... I need to."

She briefly remembered a dream she occasionally had of Eren and her living in a small house together by a lake. However, when she got to the part where Eren would come back with a fish he just caught, someone else was there in his place.

Sasha looked down slightly before looking back at her. "W-well, I want to protect you too, Mikasa," she said.

Mikasa's eye widened and she locked it with Sasha's eyes, still misty but now much clearer. As the two continued to gaze into each other's eyes, their moment was suddenly interrupted by Hange, Erwin, and the rest of the group from Stohess arriving in the mess hall. Sasha and Mikasa proceeded to separate from each other and awkwardly look away from each other. They then looked back and watched their conversation from afar.

"... and then, after that, I spoke with the council and I was able to convince them to spare Eren," Erwin said.

Hange squealed with excitement and began pacing around the room while writing down notes frantically. As she was writing, Eren approached her, at which point Hange grabbed her by the shirt and began pelting her with a barrage of questions, most of which went by way too fast for her to even hear, and some of the ones she did hear, she had no answer to. While the 9-year-old section commander was questioning Eren, Mikasa asked Sasha who it was, at which point Sasha had to explain the situation to the best of her ability. Mikasa was stunned when Sasha finished her explanation, and her mind began racing with questions just as Hange's mouth was. She was left so dumbfounded by this revelation that she hardly even noticed as Eren started to become overwhelmed with all the questions being thrown at her.

-G-

Gigan slowly flew across Paradis island, scanning the land up and down for any sign of his partner, Isabella. After the battle in Stohess, Isabella disappeared to parts unknown, leaving Gigan alone. The fact that she disappeared the moment the two of them could actually talk for a bit, now that neither human settlements were in any immediate danger worried him. So Gigan began to wander around the Island, both on foot and from the sky, looking for her. As he landed on top of a hill, squishing two titans beneath his feet in the process, Pelops appeared in his H.U.D.

" Gigan, are you sure Isabella is even still on the island?" Pelops asked. "We've been searching for several minutes. At this point may be more beneficial to activate the global scanners to see if she's anywhere else in the world."

Gigan briefly thought about it, then nodded.

{Alright. Activate the global scanners to check for Isabella,}
Gigan said.

[Kinda creepy how insistent you are about finding me,] Isabella replied from behind him.

Gigan squawked nervously and turned around to find Isabella lying prone behind him. Her feet gently kicked the air and her tail swished gently from side to side. She had a bit of a mischievous smile on her face as she supported her head with one hand. The cyborg monster stammered nervously as he tried to explain how he was only worried about her given that she just disappeared on him after they had just gotten the opportunity to talk for once. Isabella giggled before getting up into an almost quadrupedal position, her knees spread apart and her tail resting on the ground for balance.

[So, was there anything else you wanted?] She asked, before cheekily batting her non-existent eyelashes. **[Or did you just want to see me again that badly~?]**

{As a matter of fact, yes, there is something else I wanted,}
Gigan replied, brushing her playful flirtation off for the time being. **{I have a few questions for you. Namely: how the hell do you have Atomic Breath?!}**

[W-what do you mean?]

{I mean, there was only one monster prior to you that's ever been able to use Atomic Breath, and that's Godzilla.}

The world almost stopped for Isabella as she sat there, shocked at just how casually Gigan was willing to use the name of the King of the Monsters. Even Gigan was a bit surprised, especially since he knew firsthand that there was a reason to fear him.

{No other monster before or since was able to use Atomic Breath. Not even the Zillas, or any other horrific monstrosities that grew from the leftover bits of flesh that he would leave behind from battles. So how the hell are you able to use one of the most powerful abilities that any kaiju has ever had?}

Isabella clammed up at this question. Truth be told, not even she knew why she was the only one of her kind who could use this power. But she knew she couldn't just tell him that because that would only make her look even more suspicious. Fortunately for her though, she didn't have to answer just yet, as Pelops suddenly popped up in Gigan's HUD.

"Gigan, we have an emergency!"

{What's up?}

"Titan activity detected within Wall Rose!"

{WHAT!?!}

Gigan began thinking about how this could have happened, wondering if maybe the Colossal Titan or some other Kaiju breached the wall, but that was quickly shut down by Pelops, who told him that the Titans just appeared in Wall Rose moments ago. Perhaps Ymir was back? No, he definitely would have detected her if she came onto the island. But what about Eren? Maybe she used her powers to their fullest again? But then why would she use her powers to create more titans when Battrra was dead and couldn't control her anymore? None of it added up for him or Pelops. Still, obsessing over the why wasn't helping. All that mattered was what was happening, and what he was going to do about it.

{Isabella, we'll have to pick this up later.}

[What's going on?] Isabella asked.

{Titans in wall Rose. I can handle it on my own. Wait right here, I'll be back soon.}

Gigan then spread his mechanical wings and took to the skies, leaving Isabella behind. She didn't mind though, as it gave her a chance to formulate a proper response to Gigan's question.

-E-

The Scouts all sat in the mess hall, their meals of bread, soup, potatoes, and water. At each table, there was a different dynamic between each group. As Sasha and Mikasa sat together awkwardly at a table with Armin and Eren, the two both tried to work up the nerve to say something to the other girl, only to clam up before getting a single word out. Eventually, Sasha sighed and rested her head on the table, her arms crossed and her face red. She reached out to grab a steamed potato from her plate when suddenly, her pupils contracted as she heard a faint sound of something large and heavy rhythmically slamming to the ground.

Armin looked down at her as he saw her press her ear against the table. "Is everything alright, Sasha-" Armin asked, only to be shushed by her.

Sasha closed her eyes and focused on the sound. With each drop, whatever was approaching sounded as though it was growing closer and closer. Her eyes then snapped open as she realized what it was, and jumped out of her seat.

"G-GUYS?! I THINK I HEAR FOOTSTEPS!" She called, drawing the attention of the other scouts.

The Scouts began muttering among themselves before Jean spoke up.

"Footsteps? What, are you saying there are titans or something approaching?" Jean asked. "That would only be possible if Wall Rose was breached, and with Gigan around, the chances of that are slim to none."

"No, she's onto something," Mike said. Everyone turned to look at him as he stood up and sniffed the air. "I can smell them. It's faint, but I'd know that smell anywhere. They're coming."

Everyone gasped nervously. After a few minutes, the doors to the mess hall swung open, and the woman barging in, Nanaba, confirmed their fears. A group of Titans was approaching. Erwin immediately took the initiative upon receiving this news.

"Alright. Levi, you and your squad need to suit up in ODM gear," Levi nodded and gathered his squad together. Erwin then faced Eren's table. "Eren, Mikasa, you'll be on the front lines with them. Follow Captain Levi's instructions closely."

"Sir!" Eren replied before she and Mikasa hurried off with the Levi squad.

"Armin Arlert, you're with me," he said, receiving an affirmative nod from Armin. "The rest of you, I want all of you on horseback. Your mission will be to evacuate every home and settlement in this area."

Everyone saluted Erwin and hurried to action. As the fleet of horseback riders sped onward towards the group of nine Titans that were approaching them, Erwin stood atop the roof of Utgard Castle, immediately flanked by Mike and Armin. Erwin looked down at the young blonde and noticed him in deep thought.

"I can tell that there's something on your mind, young Arlert," Erwin said. "Something you'd like to say?"

"W-well, it's just..." Armin scratched his chin as he began to divulge his thoughts to Erwin and Mike. "During the battle in Stohess, we've seen that Eren's hardening ability is able to withstand a great deal of damage. From the explosion that killed an adult Zilla, to Zilla Ultima's breath beams. And if the walls are made of colossal titans, it only stands to reason that the walls are made of a similar substance, if not the exact same."

"But if that's the case, then how did the Titans manage to breach the walls, when no normal titan has ever shown such strength before?" Erwin asked. "Is that what you were thinking?" Armin nodded,

bringing a smile to the commander's face. "This is precisely why I positioned you with me, to begin with."

Armin's eyes widened in surprise. However, before they could think about this any further, they heard someone in ODM gear land behind them.

"I believe she can answer that for you," Thomas said. The trio turned around and saw him holding onto the back of Ymir's clothes.

"You know, you didn't have to drag me all the way over here," Ymir grumbled.

"Ymir? What do you know about this?" Armin asked.

"Well, for one, I know that those titans you see out there are probably not from **outside** Wall Rose," she said.

"Not from outside?" Mike pondered.

"Then where do you suppose they came from?" Erwin asked.

Ymir sighed. "You're not gonna like the answer."

-G-

The dead-eyed Titans ambled their way forwards. As the Scouts rode towards the various settlements, the Titans made a sudden turn and began charging at them. Without their ODM gear and the Levi squad still on the way, everyone was worried that they were up a creek. But then, all of a sudden, a massive shadow fell over the Titans, prompting the Scouts to look up to the sky.

"Looks like we won't be needing the Squad after all," Connie said.

The Titans glanced upwards just as a gigantic mass of metal landed on them with so much force that it caused an explosion that rocked the countryside. As the Scouts went to check on the villages, Gigan rose from the smoke, his red glow piercing through the black clouds.

Gigan then began to scan the area, turning around slowly before eventually landing upon a titan who he had been acquainted with in the past, standing miles away from the crater he created.

'Oh, well look who it is,' Gigan thought. 'It's that shaggy Titan from back in the other human settlement. I wonder how it got all the way over here.'

Gigan revved up his chainsaw hands and slowly approached it, growing closer and closer, until he was standing right above the Beast Titan. However, before he could make a move on the titan, Gigan's eyes widened as he noticed an aura surrounding the Titan.

'No way...' he thought.

{Pelops, scan this thing,} he said while pointing at the beast.

After a blue scanning beam was emitted from Gigan's visor, Pelops appeared on the HUD and showed Gigan the biometric scans, which bore a striking resemblance to Eren's biometric scans while she was in her transformed state.

'God damn it,' he thought.

"Ah, I see that those old documents were correct," the Beast Titan said. He then placed a hand on Gigan's leg as he continued. "After our encounter in the badlands, I took some time to do a bit of research on you to see if there would be any way to survive a future encounter, and low and behold, I find you're in fact the least of our worries because you are incapable of harming a human."

Gigan huffed angrily as the Beast Titan looked past him and towards the crater.

"Still though, the loss of my titans is quite a bother. I suppose it doesn't matter in the end though, as I can always make more."

'He made them!?' Gigan thought.

As the Beast Titan began to leave, Gigan tried to stomp on him, shoot him, or grab him with his tail, but he always hesitated at the last second, allowing the Beast Titan the opportunity to escape him.